

A  
0  
0  
0  
8  
0  
8  
0  
3  
7  
6



LC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

C. N.

9103. B. 3

~~7503~~





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation





TALES OF FIRENZUOLA

Subscriber's copy





TALES  
OF  
FIRENZUOLA

*Benedictine Monk of Vallambrosa*  
(XVITH CENTURY)

—For the first time translated into English—

Firenzuola, Agnolo  
"



PARIS  
ISIDORE LISEUX

1889

EM



---

---

## PREFACE

---

FIRENZUOLA is more than a pleasing storyteller: he is a masterly writer who adapts a nervous style to the service of a naturally voluptuous imagination, and the pictures of which are of a colouring sparkling with vivacity. He has been praised for his not having adhered to the language such as Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch had formed it, and for having enriched his own with a host of picturesque expressions gathered at the fountain head, namely, borrowed from the ordinary manner of speaking. We hear at Florence as in Paris more tropes on one market day, than during several hundred Academical sittings. His somewhat considerable work comprises

a collection of Oriental Apologues entitled: *Discorsi degli Animali*; *Ragionamenti d'amore*; two *Discourses on Women's Beauty*; two comedies, *La Triunzia* and *I Lucidi*; a translation of the *Golden Ass*, by Apuleius; poetry in which *Capitoli* slightly sketched and a few desultory pieces, appear. One of them, *Expulsion of new characters uselessly introduced into the Tuscan tongue*, is directed against the Trissino, who wanted to add to the alphabet certain parasitic letters, among others the omega. Two of these works at least were formerly turned into French and seem to have been in great vogue; the *Discorsi degli Animali* were translated for the first time by Gabriel Cottier, under this heading: *Pleasant and jocose discourses of Animals, with a story not less true than funny lately taken place in the city of Florence*, Lyons, 1556, 16mo, and a second time by Pierre de Larivey; they form part of a treatise entitled: *Two Books of Fabulous Philosophy*, Lyons, 1579, 16mo. Brantôme was acquainted with the *Discorsi delle bellezze delle donne*, or with the French translation. *The Golden Ass* presents this striking feature that Firenzuola, in substituting himself for the Lucius of Apuleius,

appropriated to himself not only the author's inventions, but also the hero's mis-haps which he takes on his own account, and this affords him the opportunity of recounting to us up to the end, a smattering of his own biography and a regular genealogy of his whole family. Paul Louis Courier, a shrewd judge of these matters, highly appreciated this translation owing to its slightly arch savour. 'Without reproducing obscure sentences,' says he, 'the forgotten terms of Fra Jacopone or of Cavalcanti, Firenzuola borrows from the old Tuscan a host of ingenuous and charming expressions, and his version, in which we may say all the flowers of this admirable language are concentrated, is, in many persons' opinion, what is most finished in Italian prose.'

The *Ragionamenti d'Amore* commend themselves by the same agreeableness of style and, moreover, the Romances for which they serve as frame are so many short masterpieces of sprightly narrative and ingenious wit. This is evidently his most vivid creation, the one which assures him the greatest chance of being known outside of Italy. Yet they have never before been turned into English, perhaps

owing to their title, which does not promise much interest ; perhaps because of the too refined insipidness of the preliminaries, which but little lead us to suspect how much boldness and fantasy the author is about to display. In imitation of Boccaccio, Firenzuola supposes that a society of young ladies and gallant knights is united in a pleasant villa ; they spend the time in prolonged chattings which by their object recall the quintessenced abstractions of the Courts of Love, and, having, about night-fall, chosen a Queen, they relate one after another merry tales in which, by a satirical contrast, the heavenly Venus, so mystically exalted during the preliminaries, is sacrificed without the least hesitation to the earthly Venus. Perhaps this is a symbolical turning adopted by the author to make us comprehend that pure and ideal love, though excellent as a topic of conversation, is no longer current in real life.

However witty this frame may be, it does not possess originality enough to claim much of our attention ; we have therefore overlooked the metaphysical discussions at the beginning of the *Ragionamenti* and translated only the Romances which form

their conclusion. We shall give a sufficient idea of the whole in stating that the scene is laid at Pozzolatico, near Florence, within the prescribed decorations of this sort of semi-allegorical compositions: terraced gardens, plashing fountains, purling streams, shady groves, meadows decked with flowers, and that the interlocutors are six in number, three gentlemen: Celso, Folchetto, Selvagio, and three ladies: Costanza Amaretta, Fioretta, and Bianca. Celso is Firenzuola himself; he assumes this title in many other works of his; he appears to have designated, under the names of Fioretta and Bianca, his sister and sister-in-law; under that of Folchetto, Bianca's husband, his own brother, Girolamo Firenzuola. As to Costanza Amaretta, who is taken as Queen, she was a Florentine of high descent and great wit whom Firenzuola loved with a tender love, and she died young, in the full splendour of her beauty. He conserved for her a kind of worship and, in his *Epistola in lode delle donne*, addressed to a learned Siense, Claudio Tolomei, after having placed her for her talents and beauty in the same rank as the most illustrious of whom ancient or modern history makes

mention—Sappho, Aspasia, Cornelia, Calpurnia, Sempronia, the Marchioness of Pescara, etc., he compares her for virtues to Plato's Diotima, to Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustin. But notwithstanding the aureola of chastity with which he piously surrounds her form, he fails not to let her hear with attentive ear a series of tales the principal features of which would disfigure neither the *Moyen de Parvenir*, nor the *Dames Galantes* of Brantôme.

It has been asked whether it is quite true, as some of the ancient titles have it, that the author of these amusing tales and of the *Capitoli* which are not less so, had ever worn the Benedictine habit. Tiraboschi seriously doubts it, for the convincing reason that if Firenzuola was a monk he would have known how to keep a stricter guard over his imagination. The argument is a queer one: the same as if somebody said that Rabelais must not have been Parish Priest of Meudon, since he wrote *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*. Firenzuola lived and died a Benedictine. Indeed Canon Moreni discovered in the *Bullarium Archiepiscopale* of Florence a brief of Clement VII, dated 1526, annulling his monastic vows, under



the pretext that his taking the habit and his profession were not according to the rules ; but another act much later on, passed at Prato in 1539, shows us ‘ the Reverendus Dom Angelus Florentiola, usufructuary and perpetual Administrator of the Abbey San Salvator of Vaiano, of the order of Vallombrosa,’ constituting his brother, Girolamo Firenzuola, as procurator of the Convent. He had therefore remained always attached to the order, in spite of this annulling brief, which cannot be explained. Moreover, the *Ragionamenti* are previous to it ; Firenzuola, who had nothing printed during his lifetime, dedicated them in 1525 to the Marquis of Camerino, and, still more, he had read the first Day’s Work, the only one he achieved, to Clement VII, who expressed himself highly pleased with it. We have in respect of this the author’s own testimony : ‘ I will and may boast of this, that the judicious ear of Clement the seventh, whose praises no quill however good it be could sufficiently trace, in presence of the greatest minds of Italy, remained wide open several hours listening to the sound of my own voice, while I was reading to him the *Expulsion of Letters* and the first Day’s

Work of these *Ragionamenti*, which I have just dedicated to the Most Illustrious Signora Caterina Cibo, very honourable Duchess of Camerino.'

This remembrance recalled to him the moment of his highest favour in the Pontifical Court. Let us give a few facts of his biography. He was born at Florence in 1493, of a family from Firenzuola, a small town at the foot of the Alps, between Florence and Bologna, whence its ascendants had taken the name. His great-grandfather and grandfather filled important offices in the house of the Medicis; his father, Sebastiano Firenzuola, being successively judge and public notary, discharged the functions of Chancellor, appointed by election as overseer of the city magistrates. His mother was the daughter of Alesandro Braccasi, an estimable scholar, the author of a good translation of Appian, and he was moreover first secretary of the Republic under the grand Dukes Lawrence and Peter de Medicis; he died at Rome, as ambassador of Florence with Alexander VI; Firenzuola got a mausoleum erected to him within the basilic of the Convent of Saint Praxedes, of which he was once an abbot.

Destined by his family to the ecclesiastical state, he went to study canon law at Siena, then at Perugia, where he became acquainted with the famous Pietro Aretino and formed lasting relations with him. These studies shocked him; he complains somewhere of being consumed in them with great pains and without any pleasure the best part of his youth. He attained nevertheless to a doctor's degree and at once betook himself, about the year 1516, to Rome, where he was attached to the Curia. Under the pontificate of Clement VII, several documents being found by his biographers mark him out as entrusted with the defence of a certain number of cases, in the capacity of procurator, and invested at the same time with the titles of abbot of Saint Praxedes and Saint Mary the Hermit, of Spoleto. Although he had nothing printed, his manuscript works were sufficiently scattered about to win him a lawful renown. He was besides a man of jovial humour, esteemed for the amenity of his character. 'You will diffuse mirth into the souls of those who familiarly frequent you,' writes to him the divine Aretino. 'Remember how I knew you as a schoolboy at Perugia,

as a citizen of Florence, as a prelate in Rome.' In another letter he reminds him of his kind turns with the Pope. 'I have still a recollection of the great pleasure which Pope Clement felt, the evening I prevailed on him to read what you had just composed on the *Omegas* of the Trissino. It was this that determined His Holiness, at the same time as Monsignor Bembo, to be eager to know you in person.' We have seen further back Firenzuola reading to the Pope not only his witty diatribe against the Trissino, but also the first Day's Work of the *Ragionamenti*; the Popes of that time listened to wanton tales, attended performances of Machiavelli's *Mandragola*, or Cardinal Bibbiena's *Calandra*, and laughed as simple mortals.

The death of Clement VII, in 1534, the disgust which Firenzuola felt for his juridical functions and especially a pernicious fever, the famous fever of the Pontine Marshes, which sometimes renders a stay in Rome very dangerous, obliged him to abandon the Curia. He obtained the Abbey of Vaiano, near Cremona, but tarried especially either at Florence or Prato, and endeavoured to establish in a more whole-

some air his ruined health. The fever was a long while about yielding up; it worked upon him during seven whole years, after having worn him down to a skeleton. 'I had become of so livid a hue, that I looked like a Sienese lately returned from the Maremma. Ah! wretched man! had I fallen asleep at church among the monks, they would have taken me for one who was dead, and have buried me. I absorbed a whole chemist's shop, and had more clysters administered to me than the Bishop of Scala, when he was in the world. I think I broke two hundred chamber-pots, first in Rome, next at Florence, and quite wore out the greatest physicians.'

In fine, he got rid of it thanks only to a decoction of guaiacum, the 'holy wood' so famous in the sixteenth century for its curative virtues. Being grateful, Firenzuola extolled its praises in one of his best Capitoli, *In lode del legno santo*, to which the preceding quotation belongs. Yet his death came on in 1544 or 1545, having closely followed the establishment of his health. He had at least, like the patient of whom a wag of a doctor spoke, the consolation of dying cured. He had the imprudence of

returning to Rome, and he was buried near his father, within the church of his ancient Abbey of Saint Praxedes.

This long sickness is perhaps the reason why the *Ragionamenti d'amore*, his chief work, remained unfinished. They were published, such as they were, with a few others of his works, by his brother Girolamo, under the following heading: *Prose di M. Agnolo Firenzuola, Fiorentino; in Fiorenza, appresso Lorenzo Torrentino, impressor ducale, 1552.* Firenzuola intended to add five more, arranged after the same plan, to the first Day's Work, composed of preliminary conversations and six romances. Later on they found among his papers four more romances, matter prepared beforehand for one of the subsequent Day's Work. In this translation they come under the numbers V, VI, VII, and VIII. We give the whole ten in the order adopted by the former editors, who modified Firenzuola's arrangement in order to make the ten recitals fit into the frame of but one Day's Work. Such as they are, these tales give pleasure by their free allure, their jovial tone, and the perfect finish of their style, far more than by the idle dissertations and chattings

which serve them as transitions or entries into the matter; they cause us to deeply regret that the author has not written more of them.







---

---

## ROMANCE I

### THE COMELY SLAVE

THERE LIVED IN THIS COUNTRY LONG AGO, TWO YOUNG MEN OF high descent, amply supplied with the gifts of Fortune, who, not content with the valiant exploits of their ancestors and not deeming the actions of others as genuine illustrations, rendered themselves famous and recommendable by their own, so that they imparted more splendour to their nobleness than they had received from it. They had, by their cultivated minds, courtesy and thousand occupations in which they were engaged, acquired so high a renown in Florence, that he who could speak most in their praise was deemed indeed happy. What was especially praiseworthy in them, was a certain tender friendship, a certain brotherly love which so united

them that when one went anywhere, the other went with him, and the desire of the one was likewise the desire of the other.

While these young men were thus living an honourable and quiet life, Fortune had, you would say, begrudged them it. For so it turned out that one of the two friends, Niccolo degli Albizzi, had tidings of an uncle's death on his mother's side, a rich merchant of Valencia who, without son or nearer kin, had appointed him his sole heir. It then devolved on Niccolo, who wanted to see his own affairs in person, to make up his mind about going to Spain, and he invited Coppo (this was the other's name) to accompany him, an invitation which was most welcome to him. They had already fixed the day and way of travelling, when their misfortune or doubtless their good luck would have it that just at the time of starting, Coppo's father (Giambattista Canigiani) was stricken by so frightful a sickness that he departed this life for the next in a couple of hours. Now, if Niccolo wanted to set out, he must go alone. He said goodbye to his friend most reluctantly, especially under such trials; but forced by sheer necessity, he set out towards Genoa

and, having taken a berth on a Genoese vessel, had the anchor weighed at once. Fortune was most averse to his voyage. He had not yet got more than a hundred miles from land when about sunset the sea, becoming all at once foam, began to rise and threaten, by a thousand signs, imminent danger to the passengers. The captain, wishing to take his precautions, accordingly prepared for it in the greatest hurry; but the rain and wind came suddenly on with so much violence that nothing of what was necessary could be done. Again, the night fell in an instant so pitchy dark that they could no longer distinguish any object on earth, save when a flash of lightning occasionally broke to make the situation still more horrible and dreadful, which plunged everything anew into the most profound darkness. What a pity to behold those poor passengers so often performing precisely what they should not, while they were also trying to meet the threats of heaven! Should the captain give any commands, nobody heard him, because of the rain falling in torrents, the roaring of billows dashing against one another, the straining of cordage, the flapping of sails, the flashing

of lightning, and the thunder's roar; the greater the necessity, the more need all had of common sense and courage. What courage could these poor creatures have, in your opinion, on seeing the ship now apparently attempting to jump up to the sky, then cleaving the billows as if with the intent of flinging herself into hell? Do you fancy their hair stood on end, when it looked as though the firmament, having turned into water, wanted to drop into the sea; then that the sea, in swelling, wanted to fly to the assault? What hope do you fancy they had when they beheld the others cast into the deep what they held most precious, when they flung therein their wealth to avoid themselves a worse destiny? The vessel dislocated, abandoned to the mercy of the winds, now tossed about by them, now shattered by the waves, all filled with water, was going in search of some rock to put an end to the toils of the unhappy seamen; these not knowing henceforth what to do, threw themselves into one another's arms, embraced, sobbed, and cried for mercy with all their might. Oh! how many among them would have liked to console the others, who were them-

selves in need of consolation and whose voice was smothered with sighs and tears ! Oh ! how many among them, but a little while before, defied heaven, and now seemed nuns at prayers ! Who implored the Virgin Mary, who Saint Nicholas de Bari, who yelled after Saint Elm, who talked of going to the Holy Sepulchre, who of turning monk, and who of taking a wife for God's sake ? Such a merchant swears to make restitution, another to cease usuary ; one calls upon his father, another his mother ; this one recollects his friends, that one his children. What rendered the common calamity a thousand times more horrible was to see the misery of the one taking pity on the other, to hear all these bewailings. While the unhappy creatures were in this painful situation, the topmast was broken off by a sudden sally of the tempest, and the vessel smashed into a thousand pieces, despatched the greater number of the passengers into the dread deep, there to fill the maws of fish and other marine beasts. The remainder, more skilful or less ill-used by Fortune, provided for their safety by holding on to planks. Niccolo had, among the latter, grasped a plank which he

only let go when it landed him on the coast of Barbary, near Sousa, a few miles from Tunis. Cast in this place and discovered by I know not how many fishermen who had come thither afishing, his state moved them to pity. They took him up, carried him off to a cabin hardby, and, having lighted a big fire, placed him close to it. After they had with great pain restored him to his senses and got him to talk, they noticed he spoke Latin, from which they rightly concluded he must be a Christian. and without further thoughts of taking a better fish for that morning, they unanimously agreed to take him to Tunis, where they sold him as a slave to a powerful country gentleman, named Hajji Akhmet. The latter, seeing the newcomer was young and goodlooking, thought of keeping him in his own service, and Niccolo showed so many proofs of cleverness and diligence in his duties, that he endeared himself in a very short time to his master and the whole household. He became especially a favorite with Akhmet's wife, one of the most courteous, genteel and comely women that had ever been or were still on those shores. He pleased her so well that she was no

longer happy day or night except when she saw him or heard him speaking; and she knew so nicely how to get round her husband, who would have imagined anything else but what really was her object, that he made her a present of him, so that she might keep him in her own service. The lady was most highly delighted at this, and she curbed her amorous flames for a long while. Her intention at first was to feed them in secret, without Niccolo's knowing anything about it; but from being constantly in his company they grew so troublesome that she was forced to satisfy them one way or another, and she had more than once the intention of disclosing her passion to him. Now, every time she was about putting her project into execution, the shame of being in love with a slave, the dread of not being able to rely on him, the great dangers to which she saw she was exposing her honour and life, suddenly baffled her. Retiring frequently alone, fired in different senses, she used to say to herself: 'Extinguish then, O foolish one, extinguish then this flame, while only as yet it begins to kindle! At present a little water will do for it, but later on, if it gains ground

over thee, all the water in the sea will not suffice. Ah! blind woman that thou art, dost thou not consider the infamy thou wilt heap on thyself if ever anyone comes to know that thou hast bestowed thy love upon a stranger, a slave, a Christian? Thou wilt no sooner have let him see one glimpse of liberty, than he will profit by the occasion to fly away and abandon thee. O miserable one, to bewail thy folly! Dost thou not know that while thought is wandering, love can have nothing stable? How couldst thou expect to be loved by him who dreams only of gaining his liberty? Withdraw from this nonsensical undertaking, let thy foolish love vanish, and if thou wilt at any price stain thy honesty, let it be in favour of someone who will not be hereafter a subject of shame to thee, that thou mayest excuse thyself in the eyes of those who may have heard of thy imprudence. But to whom am I speaking, O unfortunate one? to whom am I addressing such supplications? How could I have a will of my own, I, who belong to another? These thoughts, these projects, these deliberations do not become thee, O wedded wife, but rather those who can dispose of themselves



as they please ; they do not become one who is in the power of a man as I am ; I must turn my ear to the side where the voice of the master calls me. Turn then, O foolish one, turn thy words to better use, lose time no longer, waste thyself away no more. What thou wilt not do today, thou shalt be forced to do tomorrow, while running the greatest risks. Try that thy lover's will become one and the same with thy own, and know that, stranger as he is, he ought not to be held the less estimable for that, either by thee or anybody else. If we were to set a high price only on the productions of our own country, I cannot see why gold, pearls and other precious objects should be of so great a value, as they really are, outside the countries which produce them. Fortune has made a slave of him, but she has not on that account robbed him of his pleasant manners ; nor does it hinder me from recognizing the greatness of his soul, from beholding the splendor of his merits. Fortune alters nothing at birth ; it may betide anybody to become a slave ; it is not his fault, it is Fortune's ; therefore I ought to despise Fortune, and not him. And if it befell me to become a slave, it

would not make me, in the bottom of my soul, other than I am. Let not then these motives prevent my wishing him well; is it because he belongs to another religion, that I should be the more averse to him? Well, what of that, O foolish one! Am I more certain of my religion than of his? Supposing I had a thousand times all the certainty in the world about it, I do not deny it on that account, I do not the slightest thing contrary to our gods; yet who knows if, loving and beloved by him, I shall not prevail over him to believe in our law? I shall thus perform an act at once agreeable to myself and our gods. Why struggle against myself and be an enemy to my own pleasures? Why not obey my own inclinations? Do I fancy myself able to resist the laws of love? What innocence of soul were mine if I, who am but a poor silly woman, the frail target of Cupid's darts, should think myself able to keep on my guard against what thousands of the wisest of men could not escape! Let my passion then triumph over every other consideration, let the feeble force of a tender young woman no longer try to struggle against that of so powerful a mas-

ter !'

After the enamoured woman had many times reasoned and fought with herself, she finally ceded the victory to the one of the two sides towards which Love had, thanks to her own good will, urged her ; and no sooner had she imagined a chance for it, than she drew Niccolo aside, told him of her torments and pleaded for his love. Niccolo was quite bewildered at first on hearing the like, and all sorts of fancies whirled through his brain. He feared she acted in this way only to put him to the test, and he had half a mind to make her an ill-boding answer ; but the remembrance of certain fondlings she used to bestow on him rushed back into his head, and because he had discovered more discretion in her than the women of that country usually have, he bethought him of the romance of the Count of Antwerp and of the Queen of France, besides a thousand other like instances, and he deemed the occasion propitious, whatever should become of it, to reply that he was wholly disposed to obey her behest ; which he did. Nevertheless, whether he acted thus to give the thing a higher relish, whether he wished to make

somewhat of a trial of himself, or in fine no matter why, he kept her many days in suspense before deciding on it. And when she, who desired something else than empty words, clapped the saddle on his back, as the saying is, he who saw by a thousand signs that he was her master, resolved to make a Christian of her to further his own ends, before satisfying her. By means of fair and well prepared words he told her how he was at her command, but that he entreated her beforehand to promise that she would do him a very easy thing which he would ask of her. The woman, on whom the time weighed like a thousand years until the final putting of the business into operation, without thinking what he could want and out of her wits through so ardent a desire, pledged him her faith and swore a thousand oaths to do whatever he should request, whereupon Niccolo gently explained to her the nature of his resolution.

At first the imposed condition seemed very hard to the poor creature, and were it not, as she incessantly repeated, that she was ever doomed to follow the will of another, I doubt not but that she would have refused to commit this folly. But Love, who is

so well accustomed to perform miracles, knew too how to persuade her, so that after many hesitations and excuses, she was forced to say: 'Do with me as you please.' Thus, to cut a long story short, on the same day she received baptism, on the same day they were betrothed, on the same day they consummated their marriage, and the mysteries of this new religion seemed so sweet to her that, after the example of Alibech, she constantly upbraided herself for having so long delayed making a trial of it. She loved so well to be within its embrace and thoroughly instructed therein, that she no longer had any happiness except when inculcating on herself some new doctrine.

While Niccolo was teaching, she learning, and while they were both at so mild a school, without anybody getting the slightest clue into the secret, Niccolo's friend Coppo had had knowledge of his adventure and had, with a most resolute idea of effecting his ransom, come with a large sum of money to the coast of Barbary. He arrived at Tunis, and had hardly landed when he met Niccolo who was haply returning from I know not where with his mistress. After they had recognized each other, not with-

out difficulty, and embraced and kissed at least a thousand times, Niccolo, the moment he had learnt the object of his voyage and offered him becoming thanks, forbade him to hint a word about his ransom until they should talk over it again, for a reason which he explained to him later on. He then pointed out a place where they could see each other the next day and, without further discourse, took leave of him. The wife wanted to know at once who that man was and what conversation they had together, for she was torn by jealousy, fearing that not only any person whatever but even the bird flitting through space, might carry off her dear lover. He managed to satisfy her by means of a few stories of his own making. Niccolo had, as anyone may easily imagine, a very great desire for returning home; but knowing for certain that if his passionate young wife discovered anything about it, she would utterly ruin him or at least undermine his projects, he wavered at attempting the slightest thing whatever, and this was the reason why he did not wish Coppo to hint a word about it to anybody. For my part I think that this love, being deeply rooted within his heart

from long habit, for you are well aware that

*Love dispenses no man beloved from loving:*

would have placed before his eyes so many perils and obstacles that he would have resigned himself to stay where Fortune had cast him. He had nevertheless sense enough to see that this woman was allowing herself to be carried away by her passion for him, and that Hajji Akhmet would at last find out their secret. For this reason he had thought more than once of sounding her to see whether she would be willing to go to his country, and he saw her so blinded for his sake that he felt sure he would not have much trouble in persuading her, but as he had not yet solved the problem of ways and means he had remained silent until this moment. Now that Coppo was here, and thinking his coming was opportune and that the plan would succeed far more easily, he deemed it necessary to talk it over with his friend before treating about the ransom. Having then found Coppo and having thoroughly examined all the pros and cons of the case, they finally agreed upon what was to be done in the

event of the woman consenting.

Niccolo chose a favorable moment and place and, having greeted her, he said: 'My very dear mistress, to think of what it would have been necessary to do oneself, when another has fallen into a misfortune which he might quite at first have avoided, is nothing else than to wish, without knowing anything about it, to show oneself wise after the accident. It therefore appears to me necessary, if we do not wish to be numbered among such persons, to avoid the dangerous defiles into which our love is leading us, before we break our necks. Love has rendered us so reckless that, as you may judge of it still better than I, if we do not remedy it, I feel it will be the cause of our downfall. This is why I have more than once thought to myself of the means we could employ in order to escape from such a danger, and, out of a certain number which I have carefully considered, I can think of but two which are less hard than the rest. The first of them is that we shall give our minds to gradually ending our amatory customs; that way will seem to you, if your ardor is equal to mine, so hard that any other expedient, no matter



how severe, will be comparatively less painful; so, in my mind, the second has always pleased me better, although it must seem to you at first very burdensome and difficult to carry out. Yet I doubt not but that by force of pondering well over it, you will finish by finding it smiling invitingly upon you to decide and choose it boldly. You shall behold your lover's, your husband's interest and honor springing therefrom, and the opportunity of enjoying our love for ever without anguish of soul and without peril. My plan is for you to go with me to our lovely Italy. What a country it is compared with this, we will leave for future discussion. Besides, you have often heard it spoken of before both by me and others. Florence, the pleasant place of my birth, is situated in the center. It has the mildest of climates and is, be it said without disparaging others, surely the finest city in the whole world. I will not speak of churches, palaces, private dwellings, streets straight as gun-barrels, fine and spacious squares, all that is within the walls; why, the outskirts, the gardens, the villas with which it is more copiously supplied than any other city, these will appear to you as

so many paradises, and should God grant us the grace of arriving there safe, He knows how happy you will live there, and how you will upbraid yourself for not having been the first to request it. But let us lay aside what may be advantageous and pleasing to you ; I know you set but little value on that, compared with what is advantageous and pleasing to me ; even though everything should avert you from this resolution, would it not suffice, in order to persuade you, to think of the wretched state out of which you would take your lover, your spouse ? He loves you so fervently that he prefers to live a bondsman in a foreign land, he who could live a freeman in his own, rather than abandon you. Yes, he could so, for henceforth the means for redeeming me are not wanting, provided that the love I bear you permits me to do as I like with myself. That Christian to whom I was speaking the other day has almost come to an understanding with your husband but, please God, I shall not leave without my lady, my mistress, my soul ! I know her love for me is so strong, her confidence in my words so unbounded, that it seems to me I behold her already fix her

thoughts on this means which to my mind is the most propitious. Why do you hesitate? What is holding you, Madam, that I hear you not pronounce, as promptly as I could have wished, some loving word? Perhaps it seems impossible to you to leave your fatherland? If I am your happiness, as you have a thousand times declared, where I shall be, will you not have your country, your spouse, your all? The more you leave behind you here, the more you shall find over there, even a hundredfold, and you will be so delighted in frequenting our ladies, especially one of my little sisters, that you will think you have left the wild forests to come and live among men. This sister of mine will love and cherish you dearly when she learns of your kindnesses to me, and you will surely bless the day when you arrived in that delightful country. This is not the time to discuss the merits of other men with you; besides, you solved the question yourself long ago. Yet, if I have pleased and still please you to such a degree that you should bestow on me your own sweet self, I, who look more like a countryman than a brave champion, the more then will the other men be pleasing

to you for they have more graces than I. That which keeps you, now that all other reasons counsel you to fly, would it be the dread of what might be said of you in this country after your departure? Ah! Madam, let not that either hinder you from doing what is so advantageous to us both. Not that honor ought not to be placed above all, and I confess the opinion is good of those who claim that we must not mind the evil people say of us, so long as their words do not reach our ears. But neither you nor anybody else ought to be troubled about a reproach wrongfully aimed, as would be your case should anyone reprove you in this. Who can backbite you with righteous teeth for having abandoned the false religion to embrace the true one, because you have fled far from those who are deadly enemies to us Christians? Who will blame you for having entered the land of your spouse, for having dragged him out of slavery? nobody of sound judgment. On the contrary there will be a host of persons to congratulate you, to extol you to the skies. Of what are you thinking then, my darling soul? That which is keeping you back, would it be forsooth the hard-

ship and peril which you know inseparable from such an enterprise? If that is so, I can assure you there would be little risk; whereas to remain here, to conduct ourselves as our mutual love compels us, is obviously dangerous. Now, who is there who would not expose himself to an uncertain peril in order to avoid another which he knows to be most certain? As to the difficulties, I shall take charge of them myself, and I so swear to you upon my faith, if God does not deprive me of your favor, which enables me to live happy even in bondage. I have found through that friend with whom you so often find me conversing, the means of our getting away in all safety, on one of his vessels. Consider, my darling mistress, what confidence I have placed in you that I should disclose to you such grave projects. Reflect on all the good things we stand to gain, and give no thought to the dangers and difficulties. Get ready then to free me from bondage, get ready to take me to my beloved city, to your city, to my sister who, with tearful eyes and outstretched arms, implores you to restore me to her, and who offers you a loving welcome.' He accompanied these

last words with deep-drawn sighs which would have moved the eternal hills, and was then silent.

Niccolo's words so deeply touched the heart of the tender young woman that, although it appeared to her cruel and preposterous to take such a resolution, although she felt a thousand difficulties, a thousand perils pass through her head, she was thinking at the same time of all those perfidies which, they say, you men practice towards women silly enough to love you. Urged on by her great love, which smoothened down for her all the mountains, she, like the courageous women she was, told him without more ado that she was ready to do his will. To cut a long story short, after he had arranged with Coppo the when and the how and had procured the needful supplies, the woman, having previously made provision of a fair share of gold and silver and other valuables, feigned one fine morn to go out for a walk and repaired with Niccolo to the coast where Coppo's ship was moored. The moment they arrived, she and all those who were to cross over pretended they wanted to visit the ship and, leaving the others on shore, embarked and

speedily gave the sails to the wind, and before the bystanders were aware of what had happened, the ship was a mile from the shore. When they realized the trick that had been played on them they were amazed and angered, and they straightway informed Hajji Akhmet. You can imagine what a fuss was made and how everything was done to overtake them, but the wind was so favorable that they had almost reached Sicily before the pursuit began. They landed at Messina because the lady, being but sorrily accustomed to so many fatigues, was in need of rest. They therefore made up their minds to go into the heart of the town and put up at the best hotel they could find, which they did.

Now it chanced that the Court was transferred to Messina during those days, and an ambassador of the king of Tunis having come with the king of Sicily to treat some very weighty affairs, was just staying at the same hotel as our heroes, as ill-luck would have it. He perceived I know not how often the young woman by stealth, so to speak, fancied he knew her and, while remaining thus in doubt, there arrived from his Prince some letters informing him about

her flight and ordering him, if she haply landed in that country, to use all his endeavors with the king and those of whom there might be need, to have her brought back to her husband. As soon as had perused the letters, the ambassador held it for certain that this was she, and he went immediately to the king and unfolded to him his Prince's commands. The king without any delay summoned the woman and two young men before him; he had no trouble in perceiving that it was she whom they were looking for and, desirous of doing something pleasing to the king of Tunis, commanded that they should be sent back at once, without any argument. What grief was that of the poor young woman, of her unhappy Niccolo and of Coppo likewise, when they heard such sorrowful news! What cries, what tears, and what prayers! I should never have the heart to relate the thousandth part of them. Taken back by force to the harbour and re-embarked on the same ship, the command of which the king confided to a man on whom he relied, they were conveyed back to Barbary, as prisoners of the king of Tunis. Thanks to more favorable weather than they would



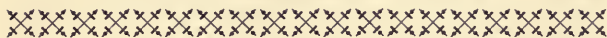
have desired, they had already got within a few miles of the creek of Carthagena, when Fortune, tired at last of so many annoyances and toils conjured up against poor Niccolo, resolved to give the wheel a turn. She caused so terrible a wind and tempest to rage that the ship was driven violently back and, within a few hours, the thing is scarcely credible, she was carried into our Tyrrhenian Sea, off Leghorn. Despoiled of her mast and rigging, and quite disabled, she fell into the hands of Pisan corsairs who allowed the young lady and two young men to redeem themselves for a large sum of money, and the three betook themselves to Pisa. They stayed there some time to establish the young lady's health, which was harassed by so many fatigues and chagrins; then, when she looked sufficiently recovered, they set out for Florence. The kind reception, the festivities, the caresses with which they were loaded on their return, I could not imagine, much less describe.

After the young woman had lived a few days in joy, when she had become strong and gay as Niccolo desired, he had her baptised and christened Beatrix. The town

made a general holiday of the event.

Niccolo then resolved to get married according to the Christian rite and, that the feast might be complete and the rejoicings general, and that the friendship which united him with Coppo might be bound by still closer ties, he gave him his sister in wedlock, and she, besides being very handsome, was no less virtuous.

The weddings being over, Signora Beatrice, more and more satisfied with the country and the conversation of the men and women, owned that Niccolò had not told her lies. She had so much friendship for her sister-in-law and the latter for her, that it would not have been easy to know which friendship was the most intimate, that of the women or that of the men. The whole four lived together so amicably that all Florence had no other topic for conversation. They became every day more happy, more contented, and more desirous of pleasing one another, nor did familiarity beget weariness in their hearts; far from that, their tenderness increased daily, and they lived a long life of perfect happiness.



## ROMANCE II

### THE METAMORPHOSIS

There was at Tivoli, an ancient city of the Latins, a gentleman named Cecc' Antonio Fornari who had the idea of taking a wife at an age when other men have a thousand griefs from theirs, and, as is the case with old men, he would not take one unless she was young and good-looking. He lit on the right thing.

One of the Coronati, named Giusto, and a man of some note be it said, seing himself overstocked with a batch of daughters and so as not to be obliged to hand out a large dowry, gave the old man one of them, a pretty and comely lass. She, on seeing herself tied up to an old fellow fallen back into childhood, and henceforth deprived of

those pleasures on account of which she had long wished to abandon her home and parents, became very angry about it. She soon grew so disgusted at the spitting, wheezing and other trophies of her husband's old age, that she thought of making herself amends and got it into her head to take, should the occasion present itself, somebody who could supply the wants of her youth better than her father had known how to do.

Fortune was far more propitious to her schemes than she had dared to hope. In fact, a young Roman named Fulvio Macaro, having repaired to Tivoli with his friend Menico Coscia, by way of amusement, and having frequently a glimpse of the young woman who appeared to him pretty, as indeed she was, fell ardently in love with her and, entrusting this Menico with the secret of his love, commended himself to him for his help.

Menico, who was a man to get out of any scrape, told his friend to be of good cheer and that if he was resolved on following out his idea in everything, he well knew how to settle matters in a way which would enable him to be with the young woman as

often as he liked. You imagine how Fulvio, who had no other desire, told him thereupon to call on him next day, but Menico replied that he was prepared to go into the matter at once, provided his friend helped. 'I have been told,' said Menico, 'that the lady's husband is on the lookout for a slip of a girl about fifteen for housework, and that he will marry her off at the end of a few years, as is still the custom at Rome. I have determined that it shall be you who will go to him, to remain there as long as you please, but listen awhile how. Our neighbor, that man from Tagliacozzo who comes sometimes to our place to do one thing or another is, as you know, a great friend of mine. While talking to me yesterday about one thing or another, he told me the old fellow had commissioned him to procure the servant, and to do this he was going home in a few days to see if he could find someone there. He is poor, and willingly offers his services to the rich. I feel sure that for a small consideration he would do whatever we wish. Let him then pretend that he has gone to Tagliacozzo and is to return thence in a fortnight or so. He will dress you up like a village girl and,

passing you off for one of his relations, will place you in your lady's mansion. When there you will only have yourself to blame, if your courage fails you. What will help you in all this is the whiteness of your skin, your beardlessness, and the fact that you have a womanish face, which has often made people think you were a woman dressed up as a man. Besides, as your nurse belonged to that village, I think you will be able to talk like a native.' 'The poor lover agreed to all this, and it seemed to him that he must wait an eternity for the scheme to be put into execution. In his imagination he was already with the lady, helping her with the housework.

Without wasting a single moment the two friends hurried off to find the countryman who was very glad of the commission, and they settled beforehand everything that was to be done. Before a month had gone by, Fulvio was working as a housemaid, and he waited on the lady (who was named Lavinia) so diligently that not only she but the whole household had the warmest regard for him. While Lucia (thus he had called himself), remaining in this position, was waiting for an opportunity of

being serviceable to her otherwise than in making the bed, it happened that Cecc'Antonio went to spend a few days in Rome, and Lavinia, seeing herself left alone, had the whim of taking Lucia to sleep with her.

On the first night, after they had got between the sheets, to one of them all mirthful at the unexpected windfall it seemed a thousand years until the other fell asleep to gather while she slept the fruit of her turmoils, this other thinking of some young blade who was shaking the dust off her fur better than her husband, began to embrace and kiss Lucia most affectionately and, as that may turn out, her hand just strayed towards the side of the place where one distinguishes a boy from a girl. Finding she was not there a woman like herself, she greatly wondered and withdrew her hand to herself, not less astounded than she would have been if she had felt all of a sudden a snake under a tuft of grass. Lucia waited without daring to say or do anything for the issue of the scheme, and Lavinia, doubting that this was the servant, stared as one aghast; yet, seeing that it was indeed Lucia, but not venturing to speak to her, she had the thought of put-

ting her hand again on the object of her astonishment, found it as at first and felt uncertain as to whether she were awake or dreaming. Then thinking that perhaps her touch might be deceiving her, she lifted the clothes, wishing to assure herself of the whole fact with her own eyes. She not only beheld with her eyes what she had touched with her hands, but discovered a heap of snow having the form of a man and the tint of fresh roses, so that she was compelled to admit the evidence, and to believe that so great a change was miraculously wrought that she might safely taste the sweetness of love during the days of her youth. Being quite encouraged, she turned towards Lucia and said: 'Oh! what do I see there this night with my own doubting eyes? I know right well that you were just now a girl, and lo! you are now become a boy. How is that? I fear I see awry or that you are some evil spirit come to my bed instead of Lucia, to make me fall into wicked temptations. Indeed I must see to the bottom of this!' While speaking thus, she slipped under Lucia and began to excite her with those provocations which frolicsome girls willingly make use of



on young brats formed before their age. She assured herself at this game that it was not a spirit bewitched and that she had not seen amiss, and she had such comfort therefrom as you yourself may imagine.

But do not think that she considered herself as out of doubt the first time, or even the third. Such mysteries are not to be accepted lightly, and I can assure you that if she had not feared for the changing of the real Lucia into a ghost, she would have believed herself quite certain of the fact only at the sixth essay. When this stage had been reached she passed from deeds to words and tenderly enquired by what manner of means the change had come about. So Lucia, recalling the events since the first day of her love, related the whole story to her. Lavinia was exceedingly glad to see herself loved by so pretty a youth and to know how he had exposed himself to so many turmoils and perils for her sake. Passing from this account to other moving discourses, and perhaps still wishing to come to a certainty for the seventh time, they tarried so long about getting up that the sun was already peeping in through the window. The moment for

doing so seemed to them arrived, and after having decided that Lucia should remain a girl during the daytime before everybody, and become a boy at night or whenever they might find the means of being alone, they left the room all joyful.

This happy accord lasted a long while ; months passed without anyone in the house becoming aware of anything, and it would have continued so for years had not Cecc' Antonio, although he was as I have said altogether beyond the age, and his donkey could hardly convey the corn to the mill once a month, seeing Lucia tripping about the house and considering her pretty good-looking, bethought himself of wishing to discharge a sieveful into her press, and teased her several times by his importunities. Lucia, fearing that some scandal might result from it one fine day, besought Lavinia for God's sake to rid her of such an annoyance. I have no need to tell you whether the gnat pricked her and whether she hummed a blindman's litany the first time she had an interview with her husband. All I can certify is that she called him something less than lord. 'Look at the bold foot-soldier who wants to go

through his drills like a cavalier ! Well I never ! What would you be like if you were young and jolly ? You who have now to occupy yourself no longer except with the graveyard and await every moment the final decree ! A pretty smack in the face you want to give me ! Leave, you old fool, leave sin as it has left you. Do you not know that even were you steel, you would not be capable of forming the tip of a Damascus needle ? Oh, it would do you great honor when you would have reduced this poor girl, who is as good as bread, to what I will not name ! That will be her dowry, to serve her for a husband. How pleased her parents will be ! How merry all her relations will be when they discover they have entrusted their ewe lamb to the care of wolves ! Tell me briefly, nasty man, if like was done on yourself, what would you think about it ? What ! have you not set all Paradise in a stir these latter days because I was serenaded ? But do you know what I have to tell you ? You will make me think of things of which I never dreamt up to now ; oh, yes ! oh, yes ! you shall have something to make you merry one of these fine days. Just you wait a bit ; I shall put

in your way what you are looking for, and since I understand that by conducting myself well it succeeds but ill with me, I shall now try if conducting myself badly does not succeed better. Whoever will have fair weather in this low deceitful world, has only to do evil!' As she accompanied these last words with four wicked little tears forcibly shed, she affected the old scamp so much that he begged her pardon and promised never to rebuke her again. But his promises were of little value and, if the tears were feigned, so was the relenting which they had provoked.

A few days later, Lavinia having repaired to a wedding party which the people of Tobaldo were celebrating, and having left behind Lucia who felt somewhat indisposed, the enterprising old fellow found her lying asleep. Here was his chance! He slipped his hands underneath her skirts and, lifting them to indulge in his little pleasure, he lighted on what he little expected. Bewildered with wonder, he stood for some time like a lifeless thing; then, revolving a thousand bad thoughts in his head, he began to ask himself what this thing meant. Lucia had her explanations and excuses

quite pat, for she had long ago conferred thereon with Lavinia in case such a thing should crop up, and knowing that he was a jolly old fellow to believe a fib just as well as the truth ; that he was not so terrible in reality as he appeared in words ; she did not in the least trouble herself, and pretended to be shedding bitter tears and implored him to hear her reasons. After he had encouraged her with a few kind words, she began, with trembling voice and down-cast eyes, to tell her tale. ' Know, my dear lord, that when I came into this house (cursed be the hour I put my foot here, since so silly an adventure was to befall me in it !) I was not what I am now. Three months ago (my God, sad life is mine !) that thing there came to me. One day as I was washing with lye, I felt a heavy weariness creep over me, and this began to grow, so small, so small, then it gradually began increasing in size so thoroughly that it has arrived at the degree you see, and if I had not seen your nephew, the tallest of them, having one like it, I should have thought it was some evil growth ; for it sometimes gives me so much trouble that I would prefer to have I know not what, I

am so ashamed of it. Yes, indeed, I am so ashamed of it that I have never dared open my mouth about it to anybody. Thus since there is on my part neither fault nor sin, I beseech you for God's sake and our Good Lady of Olive, to have pity on me. I promise you I would rather die than that people should learn so shameful a thing about a poor girl such as I.'

The dear old man, who was quite out of his depth, seeing the tears raining down her cheeks and hearing her reciting her reasons so nicely, began almost to believe that she was speaking the truth. Nevertheless, as this change seemed almost too much of a good thing, and recalling the caresses which Lavinia was wont to lavish on Lucia, he suspected some underhand work and asked himself if Lavinia had not, after finding the thing out, taken advantage of the windfall right under his very nose. So he questioned Lucia more explicitly and asked her whether her mistress knew about it. 'The Lord preserve me!' she boldly replied, seeing that the affair was progressing favorably; 'I have always been on my guard against that. I have told you and I repeat it, I would rather die than anyone

in the world should know it. If God cures me of this evil, no man living except yourself shall know it; and may God grant, since He brought this infirmity on me, that I may return to my former state! To tell you the truth, I am so grieved about it that I am sure to die soon; for besides the shame it will cause me every time I see you, knowing that you know my story, it seems to me I am the most encumbered creature in the world with this thing, excuse my mentioning it, swinging between my legs.' 'Come, my child,' replies old greybeard quite affected, 'remain as you are, and say nothing to anybody; perhaps we may find some medicine to cure you; leave it to me, and on no account say a word to your mistress.'

Thus, without another word, his head in a whirl, he left her and sought out the local doctor, whom they called Master Consolo, and goodness knows how many more people, to enquire about the accident.

Meanwhile Lavinia returned home, and when she had learnt from Lucia what had happened, I leave you to imagine what she felt. I reckon it was sadder news for her than when she knew she had so old a hus-

band. Cecc' Antonio, who had gone, as I have just stated, to enquire about the malady, having heard so much about it in one way or another, returned home more perplexed than ever. Without saying a word to anybody that night, he resolved to set out for Rome the next morning in search of some learned man who knew better how to expound the enigma to him.

At dawn he mounted his horse and proceeded on his way. He alighted at a friend's house and, after a light repast, he repaired to the University, thinking to find there better than elsewhere somebody who would know how to get this flea out of his ear, and by a happy chance he fell precisely on that dear comrade who had got Lucia placed in his household. The young man came sometimes into these quarters for pastime. Our old friend seeing him smartly dressed and saluted by a crowd of people, thought that he must be some great scholar, so he led him aside and, under an oath of secrecy, entrusted him with his torment. Menico, who thoroughly knew the fine old fellow, and who guessed at once how things stood, said to himself while laughing up his sleeve: 'You have put up at the right inn, old pal;'

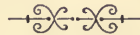


and after a long conversation, he gave him to understand once for all that the thing was not only possible, but that it had already happened several times. In order more easily to gain his belief, he took him to a bookshop and asked for a Pliny in Italian. He showed him what this author says about a similar case, Book VII, chap. IV; he then showed him what Battisto Fulgoso writes of it in his chapter 'On Miracles,' and in this way he tranquilized the old man's conscience so well that if all the people in the world had told him different, he would not have believed them. Once Menico was convinced that the thing had thoroughly entered the old boy's head and that it was not likely to leave it, he struck up another anthem and set out to persuade him not to send Lucia away from his house. It was, said he, a good omen for a place when such accidents came unexpectedly: there was never anything else but boys, and a thousand other ridiculous stories. He then begged him so strictly, if ever he had any doubt to clear up, to apply always to him, and he would help him most willingly; and he knew so well how to give him reasons, that the good old man would

not have sold them for any amount of money.

After having thanked this learned man and offered him all his fortune, Cecc' Antonio took leave of him. It seemed to him a thousand years before he got back to Tivoli to see if he could beget a boy.

As soon as he got home he began the attempt, and right nobly his wife did her share, so as not to give the lie to the omen. In due course Lavinia was brought to bed of a boy, which meant that Lucia remained at the house as long as she liked, without the old fellow perceiving or wishing to perceive anything,



---

---

## ROMANCE III

### THE DOUBLE CHANGE

There lived in the time of our fathers, at Florence, a very rich merchant named Girolamo Cambini who had a wife that was held in her youth to be incontestably the prettiest in the whole town. What was above all the rest praiseworthy in her was her virtue, so much so that she made a show of placing nothing at a higher price, and, far from looking at men, she seemed to be unaware of their existence.

Now it happened that many fellows, after having been smitten by her extraordinary beauty, perceiving at length her coldness and not having been able to obtain from her a single glance, desponded in a short time of the enterprise ; and it was, I think,

their complaints, often heaved to heaven, that decided Love to take charge of their vengeance.

There lived in Florence at this time a young man of noble family named Master Pietro of the Bardi, but, as he was a priest who possessed among other benefices a fine abbey, people called him the Abbot. He was universally considered the handsomest fellow in Florence, and I think I remember having seen him when I was a slip of a girl, and old as he was then, he still seemed very good-looking. Our charming young wife could not, thanks to that lovely form, prevent herself from making a truce with her hard-heartedness and falling madly in love with him; nevertheless, in order not to wander away from her habits, she enjoyed him and his good looks in the depths of her soul without letting anything come to the surface, or she used to talk of him mysteriously with one of her little chambermaids, bred and fed in her father's house, whom she kept for her personal service. In this way she smothered her amorous flames as best she could.

Many and many days had sped by for her in like sufferings, when at last the idea

struck her to make shift with her amorous caprice in such a way that neither the Abbot nor anybody else would suspect anything, and here is how. She enjoined on her maid Laldomine, every time she should happen to meet the aforesaid Abbot, to attract his attention by oglings and slight tokens of friendship, guessing that he would be easily smitten thereby, the more so because the girl was very pretty, having something alluring in her, and besides, her peculiar garments which were not quite those of a person of condition nor yet those of a servant, imparted to her an extraordinary grace.

One morning as the two women were at Santa Croce, on the occasion of some feast or other, the Abbot happened to be there also, and the cunning little wench put her mistress's recommendations into practice, though quite uselessly for the Abbot saw or feigned to see nothing, probably because he was still young and unused to such goings-on.

There chanced to be in the Abbot's company another young man, a Florentine also, named Carlo Sasseti, who, having long coveted this Laldomine, remarked her ogl-

ings, and set about devising some clever trick; he was only awaiting an opportunity and he immediately put his project into execution.

It so happened about this time that the husband of Agnoletta (such was the lady's name), mounted horse and set out to Florence for a few days. Carlo, who had an eye open for that, used to do nothing but pass every evening between eight and nine o'clock along the street in which the two women were living, and once he perceived Laldomine through a pretty low window on the ground floor, near the staircase looking over a little street which was next the house. Owing to the heat, which was very great, the servant was going with a candle in her hand to fetch her mistress some water. Carlo had no sooner caught a glimpse of her than he drew near the window and began in a low voice to call Laldomine; she was quite astonished but, instead of closing the window and going about her business as anyone would have done who did not wish to listen to idle stories and answer them, she hid the light, came to the window and said: 'Who is there?' Carlo quickly answered that it was the sweetheart whom

she knew very well, and that he wanted to have two words with her. 'What sweet-heart do you mean? You had better go about your business, and be ashamed to you. By God's cross! if our men were here you would not act like that. A sign there's no one at home but women! Leave here, bad luck to you, you brazen scamp, before I break my jug on your head!' Carlo, who had been more than once in such scrapes and knew that the true manner of saying No is for us not to lend our ears to the least word of tricksters, was not a bit frightened. Using the sweetest of accents, he besought her once more to open the door, saying at the same time that he was the Abbot. The wench had no sooner heard the Abbot named than she softened down completely, and in a chastened tone enquired: 'What Abbot? What have I to do with abbots and monks? Begone, begone! If you were the Abbot you would not be out at this time of day; I know very well that good priests like he is do not ramble about at night a-whoring after other men's wives, and especially to the homes of honest women.' 'My Laldomine,' Carlo replied, 'the great love I bear you forces

me to do what I ought to be on my guard against ; but if I come to importune you at such an hour, let it not surprise you. I have so earnest a desire to open my heart to you, that there is nothing I would not do for the sake of a few words with you. Have then the goodness, my hope, to let me in, if only for a moment ; do not refuse me a thing of such slight importance.'

Laldomine felt touched by such entreaties and, thinking it certainly was the Abbot, she was for opening the door on the instant ; but she thought it would be as well to make sure it really was he by means of some understood sign, so she resolved to wait till the following night. She therefore said to him, half in jest : ' Be off with you, rascal ! Do you think I do not know that you are not the Abbot ? If I were quite sure you were he I would let you in, not to do harm you may be sure, but to find out what you want with me and to tell Girolamo of the fine affronts you offer him when he is not at home. And if you were not the Abbot ? Oh, unhappy woman that I should be ! I should consider myself the most wretched woman from Borgo-Allegri. But come this way tomorrow afternoon about three o'clock



when I will await you on the doorstep and, as a sign that it will be you, when you are right in front of the door, blow your nose in this handkerchief ;' (she here gave him a handkerchief with a black silk border) 'yes, do that, and I promise you that I will let you in. You may then say to me what you like, anything proper I mean ; do not go and think the contrary.'

Having said this she shut the window in his face without even shaking hands and; running off to her mistress, told her what had happened. The lady raised her hands to heaven and, considering the moment had certainly come when her stratagem was going to succeed, thanked her with a thousand kisses and caresses.

Meanwhile Carlo went home to bed, but was unable to sleep a wink through thinking of what could be done to make the Abbot give the sign. He got up wholly absorbed by this problem and repaired about mass-time to Nunziata where, chancing to meet his friend Girolamo Firenzuola, who was wont to spend the whole day with the Abbot, he related his adventure of the previous evening and craved his help and advice regarding the sign to be given.

Firenzuola at once told him to be of good hope and, if that was his only trouble, he could be at peace for he himself would do whatever was needed. After these words he took the handkerchief and left his friend.

When the time appeared to him suitable, he went to the Abbot, took him for a walk and, passing from one topic to another while strolling along, he led him unsuspectingly by Agnoletta's house. When they were right bang in front of the door, Firenzuola said to the Abbot, previously putting the handkerchief into his hand: 'Wipe your nose, old chap, it's all dirty.' The Abbot who thought no more about it, took the handkerchief and blew into it, and Laldomine and Agnoletta firmly believed that he had only blown his nose to give the agreed-on sign, and they rejoiced accordingly.

The two young men said no more to each other and they directed their steps towards the San Giovanni Square; there Firenzuola asked the Abbot's permission to leave and he went off to Carlo who was waiting for him near the hospital of the Orphanes. He told him exactly what had taken place, then, bidding him goodbye, he left him

alone in his joy.

The night having come, Carlo went about nine o'clock to the house of the two women and, having planted himself beside the same window as before, awaited the coming of Laldomine.

He had not been there very long when the servant, prompted by her who was still more eager than Carlo, came to the window, saw him, recognized him as the visitor of yestereve, and nodded to him to go to the door. Carlo went to the door and, finding it open, entered the house quietly. He wanted, as soon as he was inside, to take Laldomine in his arms and kiss her, but she, being faithful to her mistress, would listen to nothing and bade him stay there very tranquilly until Madam had gone to bed. Then, feigning that somebody was calling her, she left the hall and went off to Agnoletta who was eagerly awaiting the issue of all this. When she found out that the Abbot was in her house, if she was not delighted at it, well—I ask you to read on.

Agnoletta had a bed made up with the finest clothes in a room next the hall, and then told Laldomine to go for the Abbot and make him sleep there. The maid

groped her way back to Carlo and silently led him into the chamber, telling him to take off his clothes and get into bed. She then went out, pretending she was going to see if her mistress was asleep and, before much time had passed, Madonna Agnoletta well bathed and perfumed, went softly to him, instead and in place of Laldomine, and got into bed beside him.

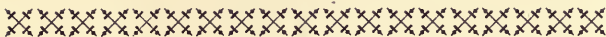
Although the darkness contrived to conceal her beauty, her dazzling whiteness was such that it was hard for her to disguise herself. In the belief the two lovers were in, of being, the one with Laldomine and the other with the Abbot, they were afraid to converse, and it was by smacks, tight embraces and all the endearments natural to so lucky a couple that they understood each other, making each other the tenderest caresses as you may imagine. If any fond ejaculation chanced to pass their lips, it was murmured so low that the other could not hear it, and, wondering at such discretion, they were only the gladder for it. But what gives me most mind to laugh when I think of it all, is the mutual satisfaction they felt for having arrived at their end by so amusing a drollery. While she

was laughing to herself for having so nicely taken him in, he was laughing at her for having been taken in, and they were both so pleased with this fine fun that it enhanced their enjoyment two-fold. Without in the least suspecting who one or the other was, they spent the whole night in such amusement, such rejoicings, and such transports that they could have wished it an eternity long.

When morning dawned Agnoletta got up and, pretending she was going I know not where, sent Laldomine in her place. She made Carlo dress himself quickly, and then let him out secretly by a back-door. But that this night which had been the first should not also be the last, they agreed that whenever Girolamo was away they would take advantage of the occasion, and so they often met, without anyone being the wiser.

Judge, lovely youths, whether this lady's craft was great ; she knew, under another's name and without risking her honor, how to arrange for a pleasant journey through life's uncharted seas !





## ROMANCE IV

### PENANCE

You must know there lived in the Pisto-  
jan mountains, a long time ago, a priest  
named Dom Giovanni, curate of Santa  
Maria of Quarantola ; and, in order to keep  
up the usual custom of country priests, he  
fell madly in love with one of his parishon-  
iers. Her name was Tonia and she was the  
wife of one of the local big guns, a man  
named Giovanni, but better known as Ciar-  
paglia. This Tonia was perhaps twenty-  
two ; she was well set up and bonny, and  
rather dark owing to the excessive love the  
sun bore her. Among other capacities,  
such as being skilled in nailing down a base  
coin and digging a straight furrow, she was  
also the best dancer in the place, and if

anybody unfortunately chanced to go through the sets with her, after the rigadon, she was so longwinded that she would put a hundred men out of breath. Happy indeed was he who could dance a single heat with her, and I can assure you that she had been the cause of more than one complaint.

Now, when this jolly damsel discovered the clerical passion, not being in the least intimidated by it, she occasionally laid herself out to cajole him, and he jumped with joy like a two-year-old. He was gnawing into her more and more every day and, without ever speaking of anything below the waist, he would come and chat with her for a couple of hours, telling her the funniest tales you ever heard. She, who was more cunning than the devil, in order to see if he was very accommodating with folks and if he held out stoutly against the temptation of the purse, always asked him for some little trifle whenever she knew he was going to town, such as two farthings' worth of Levant red, a little ceruse, a buckle for her belt, or some similar bauble. The priest used to spend his money on her as willingly as he would on a church repair.



With all this, he was waiting ; and, whether he was satisfied with dressing as a beau for show, by wearing the traditional garb of an angel, and that in Platonic love he found his needs supplied ; or whether he was afraid of the husband, or no matter why—he was waiting until she would say to him : ‘Ser Giovanni, do come to bed with me.’

This lasted fully two months, which he spent in feeding on the wind, like the clown’s donkey, while she made some little profit by him, but things got no forwarder. At length, whether Tonia took it too easy like a woman who was not ashamed to ask him repeatedly for a pair of yellow buskins, those in fashion, split at the sides and laced with a string, then a pair of perforated galoches with lovely white bridles set off with all sorts of arabesques, or whether it was the urge of Nature which daily waxed more urgent, or for no matter what other motive, he thought it would be well on the first occasion that should present itself and whatever might come of it, to ask her fair and square if there was anything doing.

One day when he espied her alone he brought her a salad from his garden, for he

had the finest cabbage lettuce ever you did see, and, after having given it her, he went and sat in front of her and ogled her withal. He then burst into the following speech : ' Well ! look how pretty she is to-day, this dear Tonia. By the Gospel, I know not what I have not done for you. Oh ! you are fairer than the women on that picture of the temptation of Saint Anthony which Frusino di Meo Puliti recently painted in our church for the salvation of his soul. What lady of Pistoja is as handsome as you ? See if those two lips do not resemble the border of my festival chasuble ! What joy even to bite them, and the mark thereof to remain till vintage-time ! Faith, I swear to you by the Seven Virtues of the Mass, if I were not a priest and you not married, I should do what the occasion suggests. Oh, the delicious feasts I should make of you ! The deuce take it if I should not get rid of the rage which torments my belly ! '

While our gentleman was thus holding forth, Tonia remained as though half vexed, with one eye threatening and the other inviting. When he had ended his fine harangue she, while shaking her head, replied : ' Ah ! monseignor, come, come ! you have

no need to poke fun at me. If I do not please you, I do not mind so long as I please my husband.'

The priest, who already felt sure of the affair and shook with joy like a wagtail, took heart and continued: 'Happy if you pleased me much less, my jewel, for you compel me to follow you about. Oh! what would I not give to be able to touch but once those rosebuds you have in your stays. They consume me quicker than a farthing candle before the altar!' Tonia replied: 'Now I wonder what you really would pay? Why, you are more niggardly than a cock! Faith, he who names a priest names a beggar, and perhaps you don't mean to spend even a copper! As if I did not know you made a stepmother's face when I asked you the other day for those galoches! Anybody might think I was asking you for the world and all. I know very well that when your neighbor Mencaglio wanted something from Tentennino's wife, he jolly well had to pay half the price of that petticoat she had made for All Saints' Day. And you know enough about petticoats to know that that wasn't bought for nothing.' 'By the body of Saint Nothingatall, my dear Tonia,'

cried the priest, 'you are a thousand times wrong; for I am more open-handed with women than anyone else I know, and I never go to town without spending at least two bolognini with the pretty ladies who live behind the Prior's Palace. That being so, think of what I would do for you with your lovely figure! You have so stirred up my liver and tripes that I have no longer any leisure to despatch a mouthful of the Office and, to tell you the truth, I fear you have ensorcelled me.'

Hearing such fine promises, the cunning dame wished to make a trial of him and so she told him that she would be happy to give herself to him for his pleasure, provided that he would bind himself to buy her a pair of wide yellow serge sleeves edged with green velvet, also green ribbons which they tie in the hair and let float about in the air, a green hair-net with its ear-knot, and, besides, to lend her three bolognini for a piece of linen from the weaver's; if not, he had only to return to his pretty ladies who served him so well for his two bolognini.

The poor priest, whose clapper was quite ready for the bell, unwilling to lose so fine an opportunity, promised her not only the

sleeves, but the petticoat with an under one as well, and he wanted straightway to join battle, when she, seeming rather to enjoy the flirting exclaimed: 'Oh, oh! Dom Giovanni, my darling, just look and see if you have not by chance a few odd coppers in your pocket. I am very hard up and, believe me, my old man hasn't a rag of a shirt to put on his back.'

The good priest would have preferred to have been granted credit, and he tried to make out that he was a bit short, but that, when the Complines were ended, he would go straight to the church and look in the candle boxes to see if there was enough in them to make up the amount and, if so, he would let her have the cash at once. But Tonia, noticing how he was imposing on her, pretended she was vexed and she said to him in a sour tone of voice: 'Did I not say that you are as mean as they make 'em? Clear out! By the Cross, you shall not lay a hand on me till you have shelled out. I'm taking a lesson out of the book of you priests—you who will not sing unless you get paid on the nail! It suffices, I think, if I am willing to wait for the rest until you have been to town; but a trifle

on account I must have, for I do not know which way to turn for a penny.'

'Look here now, do not get angry, my dear Toniotta; I will just see whether by any possible chance I have some money on me.' Thus speaking, he pulled out of his breeches pocket a small purse full of holes from which he laboriously squeezed a few coppers which, with many a wry grimace, he paid over one by one. No sooner was it done than she, all merry, led him away to a nearby barn to help him chime his bells a bit. And there they met more than once until such time as he went to Pistoja.

When he was on his return, whether it was that he had lost his memory or was grieved to spend his money, he at any rate only bought the net, which he took her, and apologized because he had forgotten the sleeves at home. He promised to bring them next day and he knew so well how to wheedle her that, taking the net, she was still pleased to chime the triple bob-major. But one day and another passed and the mean old scamp brought neither sleeves nor cuffs. Tonia began to be vexed and one fine evening let fly at him with a few complimentary remarks. He who had

pretty fairly shaken his donkey's bridle, thinking that if she wanted sleeves she had only to buy them, replied to her so briskly that she was highly displeased with him and resolved to avenge herself 'Away, away, you petticoated swindler,' said she to herself, while reproaching herself for her folly; 'if I don't make you sit up for it, may a fever burn me up! I have been silly to entangle myself with so despicable a brood, as if I had not heard it said a thousand times that they are all of the same savor; but let it rest there for now.'

The better to show what her anger was, she remained three or four days without even looking at him, then, in order to be the more easily able to avenge herself on him according to the scheme she had conceived, she began again to coax him with provoking words and, without speaking about the sleeves, pretended she had made peace with him.

One day, when the moment seemed propitious for the execution of her plan, she called him to her and told him how her Ciarpaglia had gone to Cutigliano and begged him, if he wished to treat himself to an agreeable pleasure with her, to come to the

house for her about None-time, when she would be alone and expecting him ; that if by chance he did not find her in, to kindly wait a bit as she would soon be back.

Ask not whether Dom Caprone felt happy at such a request ; he stood in his slippers, saying to himself : ‘ I must say I was surprised at her being so long about falling in love with me. You can see the sleeves haven’t bothered her much. I was a fool to give her anything at all ; it would have been all the same by now. I’ll tell you what, Dom Giovanni, if you don’t get more than your money’s worth now, I shall think you’re the biggest fool ever.’

While thus talking to himself, he was awaiting the appointed hour, and it had no sooner come than he did as the woman had bidden him. The minx had that morning related to her husband how the priest had more than once requested her for her virtue, and the present arrangement was agreed on by them in order to inflict a severe chastisement on the priest.

As soon as the woman perceived Dom Giovanni entering, she beckoned to Ciarpaglia and one of his brothers who were watching out for this moment, and, preced-



ing them softly, went off for the gallant who was already on the bed with his feet in the air. Dom Giovanni had no sooner espied her than, without doubting anything, he went to meet her. Saluting her politely, he tried to throw his arms round her neck and kiss her in the French fashion; but he had hardly time to accost her when Ciarpaglia appeared, crying like a madman: 'Ah! you whoremonger of a priest—you shaven pate! Wait, wait till I drop on you! Is that the way a pious priest behaves, eh? May God heap calamities on you, you beggar's get! Go and herd swine! Be off to the sty, and not to the church, you hypocrite!' Then turning aside to the brother, in a rage that had no equal, he continued: 'Don't hold me back—let me get at him—or I will do you an injury. Leave it to me! I'll blood my wife, and eat this traitor's heart, red hot, red hot!'

While the man was thus raving, the priest, breech-befouled, had slunk in a funk beneath the bed, and yelled for mercy with all his might. But it was so much chaff thrown against the wind, because Ciarpaglia was fully determined that for once it should be the layman who would impose penance

on the priest. He had in this very room a large chest which had lain there since the time of his great grandfather, and in which his wife kept the best of her clothes. He opened it, flung out all the gewgaws and, dragging the priest from under the bed, made him pull his breeches down, which the latter had, while waiting for Tonia, already unlaced, not to let her languish too long, as I guess; he seized his testicles, which the priest had stout and of fair length as befitted a gallant, put them into the chest, nailed down the lid, then with a big key stuffed up the keyhole and, having got his brother to give him an old notched razor, he laid this on the chest without a word of explanation and then went off to his work.

The unfortunate priest, thus left in the state you may imagine, felt such pain at first that he was like to faint. Fortunately the lock was so dislocated that the bolt scarcely entered the hasp, and there was a gap between the lid and the box, so at first our hero came to no great harm. Nevertheless, every time he caught sight of the razor and thought of the place where he had been seized, such agony pressed on his

heart that he wondered he was not yet dead; had he not forced himself to keep at his ease awhile in saying to himself that they only wanted to frighten him, and that they would not be long before coming to free him from this torture, I believe he would have been really dead.

After he had remained pretty long undecided between doubt and hope, seeing nobody was coming to his aid, and his flesh in beginning to swell was causing him considerable pain, he started to cry for help. No help came; he then attempted to break the lock. The only result was to tire himself and increase the pain in the tumefying flesh. He then ceased from exciting himself and began to implore assistance.

Assistance did not come, mercy was absent, and the pain got worse and worse. Despairing of getting safely out of the affair, he took hold of the razor in the firm resolution to end such agony, even at the cost of his life; but straightway seized with a cowardly weakness and compassion for himself, he cried out while weeping: 'Oh my God! what have I done to deserve this? Cursed be Tonia and the first day I ever set eyes on her!' Then oppressed by

an inexpressible torment, he became silent.

Some time after, he fixed his eyes on the razor, took hold of it again and, slightly grazing the skin, tried how it hurt him ; but he had hardly drawn it nigh when there came over him such a cold sweat, a dread, a swoon, that he felt himself fainting off. No longer knowing what to do, worn out by fatigue, he lay on his belly across the chest, and while now whining, now sighing, now yelling, now offering himself to God, now blaspheming, the pain exasperated him and became so acute that, being no longer able to bear it, he saw himself forced to use the only means which remained to him for his deliverance. Making a virtue of necessity, he grasped the razor, exercised on himself the vengeance of Ciarpaglia and separated himself from his privy parts. The operation caused him so terrible a pain that he dropped down half dead, and bellowing like a wounded bull. The folks that Ciarpaglia had carefully gathered came running at this noise, and they tended the priest so that he escaped with his life—if it can be called living to be deprived of the mainstay of life.

---

---

ROMANCE V

TEMPTATION OF THE FLESH

There was at Perugia, and still is to-day, a very rich convent crowded with Perugian ladies who, for want of knowing my excellent receipt, had erred from their father, Saint Benedict's, rule.

Most of the nuns, perhaps all, being thoroughly in accord with the abbess, occupied themselves only in procuring those pleasures of which the want of a dowry, the papas' avarice, the mammas' preferences, the stepmothers' jealousy or other similar accidents had deprived them, and they had carried them to such a pitch that one might easily find virtue everywhere, save in this holy retreat. The bishop was therefore obliged, far more by the complaints which

the folks of the place had frequently made him than by any vigilance or solicitude on his part, to find some remedy against their disorderly life. He therefore ordered part of them, chiefly those who, grown old in wickedness, were but little fit to enter on a new life, to be sent away. He kept the rest and added to them a certain number of girls, as well as those chosen in other convents of purer morals. Among the latter was a venerable matron who had lived for more than forty years in the convent of Monte Lucci in an odor of sanctity, and he appointed her as abbess. By means of new rules and a good example she at length brought the house to a suitable observance.

This abbess had ordered among other prescriptions that, between None and Vespers, at the chiming of a hundred bells which she took the greatest care to have rung, all the nuns should be bound to betake themselves to the chapel, or their cells, or wherever they would like best, and to remain there one half-hour in prayer, to beseech the good Lord to remove from them all evil temptations which might come from the flesh; the one she saw putting most fervor in this practice, her she considered

to be of better will in living well than any other, believing, and she was not mistaken, that the sting of the flesh once mastered, all the rest would be easy. But, for the reason that what is the outcome of violence does not last long, and pestilent water easily spreads again over its former bed, it turned out that among the old ones who had remained, a certain Sister Appellagia, both young and pretty, could no longer endure to have, in order to satisfy her already corrupted appetite, but prayers and the sound of bells. Previous to the reforms she had fallen in love with a young man of Perugia who was noble and very rich, and who enjoyed great favor with Giovan-Paolo Baglione; he too loved her exceedingly, and they had so well known how to act that they were often together in the nun's cell for three or four hours at a time, and jolly hours and all! This was done so secretly that it was impossible for anyone to notice it but, as she could not, for fear of giving the alarm, remain locked up with him all day long in her room as she would have wished, and besides she was obliged to keep with the other sisters in the convent for the usual exercises of the house, as soon

## 72 TEMPTATION OF THE FLESH

as she heard the blessed bell she ran quickly to her cell, under pretext of the said prayer, so quickly that she seemed going up to paradise. The abbess, who had never suspected anything, seeing her so exact in this intention, had conceived the highest opinion of her.

Now it so happened one day that one of the ancient nuns having gone into the garden to gather a little salad to be sent to some relation, heard the temptation-bell ring, and she, fearing the messenger might go away without the salad, decided to go on filling her basket and to let the prayer slide. Tidings of this misdeed were immediately carried to the abbess who, having called the delinquent to her, made a row about it, whato, great God! Among other things she said to her, and what stung her most was, that she should take as a model Sister Appellagia, who never found herself so busy in anything of no matter how much importance, but she very quickly left it the moment she heard that bell ringing.

When the nun, who was perhaps better acquainted with the young brood of the convent than the abbess, saw herself reproached by the example of Sister Appell-



agia, she would listen no further and all in a rage she said to herself: 'To be sure, I must indeed see whence come so much fervor and devotion. There is something fishy at the bottom of it, oh! yes, and I shall just go and find out what she does in her cell. Only let to-morrow come, and I'll make the whole convent laugh.' While speaking to herself in this way, and pregnant with an evil will, she waited till the next day for the temptation-bell to ring; the moment having come, the cussed nun, as soon as she saw Sister Appellagia running to her cell in order to flee the temptation, softly drew near the door, made a hole in a certain opening which was covered inside with a sheet of paper, and discovered how the learned young damsel had found the true means of freeing herself from temptation. Without making the slightest noise she went off full of glee to the abbess, told her how things stood, and took her to see the game of backgammon. I could never describe to you the intense pain and trouble which the poor abbess felt on hearing so hideous a story, for it seemed to her indeed that she had lost her time and pains in effecting so many reforms. Fired with rage,

she went to Appellagia's cell, burst open the door and, beholding with her very eyes what she had probably never even dreamt of before, she nearly collapsed with grief. Turning to the little nun, she called her the grossest names that were ever addressed to a woman of this kind taken in a similar case. 'This was then, you devil's get, the motive of your devotion! It is for this you showed yourself so prompt in running to lock yourself in your cell, you nasty, bare-faced baggage! So the teachings inculcated on you, the warnings given you, and the new reforms have all produced this fine fruit! Is it for this I left Monte Lucci, to be witness of such ignominy, to behold with my own eyes within the space of two months what I had not even imagined in thought in forty years! God grant that I stay no longer here, where the Devil has so much power and audacity!'

Having addressed these words and many more to the young girl, she turned to upbraid the man and warn him what his end would be if he did not quickly turn from his evil ways. Returning then to the sister, she added: 'For this one, the profligate, I shall inflict such a chastisement as

will fit so enormous a crime.' But Appellagia, who was beginning to grow tired of these reproaches, could bear them no longer and, displaying a countenance which would have made one say: "She indeed is beautiful and good," spoke in this manner: 'Madam, you make much ado about nothing, and in my opinion you are a thousand times wrong. Tell me, prithee, why have you prescribed that every day at the sound of the bell we offer up a private orison, if it be not that every one of us be delivered from the temptation of the flesh? What better means could you invent than the one I have discovered myself? What other road could we take that would give such rest and peace? The prayers and acts of your invention only strengthen our temptations, whereas by my method I can get to sleep with my mind as free from naughty fancies as I sincerely hope yours is. Anyhow, to cut a long story short, either allow me to preserve myself from temptation as I understand things, or give me leave to go where I think fit; for my part I do not intend to trouble the ears of the Lord by day, only to find myself tempted and tormented all through the night.'

## 76 TEMPTATION OF THE FLESH

The abbess, on hearing her give so impudent an answer, considered that it would be better policy and more profitable to the convent to pack her off than to keep her against her will. The young man also begged for the nun's release, and this decided the abbess. She at once gave the nun permission to quit the convent, and the quicker the better. And on that very same night the little strumpet went off to sleep at the young man's house, and she delivered herself from the temptation of the flesh during many long months, nor did she need to await the warning sound of a bell.



---

---

## ROMANCE VI

### THE TWO FRIENDS

Many years ago there lived at Florence two young men of high descent and great wealth, the one named Lapo Tornaquinci, the other Niccolo of the Albizi, who had, from their earliest boyhood, contracted so close a friendship, that one would have fancied they could only live together.

They had been living thus for ten years, when Niccolo's father departed this life, leaving his son more than thirty thousand ducats' worth of goods, and, as Lapo was in need of a hundred ducats, Niccolo not only obliged him with the amount without even waiting to be asked for it, but begged him to consider himself a part-owner of the fortune : tokens indeed of a truly noble and

virtuous soul, worthy of causing the highest hopes to be conceived, had not the too emancipated youthfulness, naturally prone to evil, the wealth acquired without work, and the somewhat unpraiseworthy frequentings, engaged him in a wicked life. Indeed, as he followed the example of those who at night go to bed poor and rise in the morning rich, after having long drudged in misery, he soon had round him a gang of fellows of so depraved a life, that they would have removed the aureola from the greatest saint's head; and those keeping company with him, now at dinner, now at supper, taking him to such and such a feast or to the house of some lost woman, made him squander so much money that it really was shameful. His friend, being a very sober and reserved young man, on seeing this, was grieved to the bottom of his heart and was all day long behind him to recall him to righteousness, to rebuke him for his wrongs, and to render him all the kind acts which their friendship demanded. But all was in vain. The new cronies had, with their dishonorable pastimes and pernicious counsels, more sway over him than Lapo with his wise warnings; and these fellows,

who were watching Lapo, related so much evil to Niccolo about him and cried him down to such a degree that, having begun by detaching himself from him, he ended by fleeing from him, thus intimating that he intended to live in his own way. Lapo, when once sure of the fact, ceased through weariness from being always after him, and, unable to do anything for him, let him conduct himself as he pleased. The upshot was that the poor fool, continuing to live as he ought not to do, saw an event befall him of which he was but little thinking.

Just at that time there was at Florence a handsome and graceful young widow of pleasing manners who, having contracted the habit, even during the lifetime of her husband, of preferring money to honor, without casting a further thought on the family in which she was born or that into which she had entered by marriage, the both being of great nobility, she easily gratified young men with her love, provided they were not only fine fellows in appearance but were flush of money and generous.

Both before and during her widowhood she had plucked more than one pigeon clean, though passing for a second Saint

Bridget in the eyes of her relatives.

At the first tidings she had of Niccolo's fortune and the pace he was going, she at once founded great projects on him and, having secured an introduction, began to pretend she was smitten by him. Then, as though she could no longer conceal her infatuation, she set to entice him night and day with letters and messengers. I have no need to tell you whether Niccolo, who had been persuaded by his cronies that he was a fair devil with the ladies, was pleased with himself or not. Happy was he who could stick in his little word to flatter him, to congratulate him on his latest conquest and extol the lady to the skies! More than one dinner was wheedled out of him over this affair, and they wound him up so well than nothing else would suit any longer but discussing the lady's charms with these precious rascals. And she knew how to get round him so nicely that, while pretending she was dying of love, she succeeded in finding herself alone with him to do what she had already done with many others.

Being pretty, and having a way with her, she knew how to make a man dote on her better than any strut who had spent twen-



ty years on her greens, sometimes using the mildest expressions in the world, sometimes the harshest, to-day feigning she is unable to live any longer without him, so much she loved him, and to-morrow making him jealous with a new sweetheart, warning him that the moment was come to wed her, then wishing it no longer, banging her door in his face, again running after him, at another time pretending to be big with child, she so exasperated the poor wretch that he completely lost his bearings. All things else had gone out of his head, his affairs remained at random, the new friends as well as the old were thrown aside; diversions, games, suppers were all, all for her, when she wished and as she wished them. From the moment she perceived that the bird had no further need of being tamed, she set her mind on clipping his wings so that he could not fly away, and she succeeded in it pretty well, not only to estrange Lapo who was his true friend, but to create mischief in the hearts of his other friends of jovial time who had themselves thrown him into her clutches. And it seemed to them that all that the pretty lady racked out of Niccolo came from their purses, and they were

quite right, for the strut finally reduced him by her craft and intrigues to such an extremity that, far from being able to give them a dinner or supper, he had not enough money left to feed himself.

When he saw to what state he was come, he recognized how much better he would have done by lending an ear to the advice of Lapo than listening to the flatteries of his new favorites, and he realised besides what a wretched end the love of these women always has, who offer the pleasures of their bodies to the first comer, not indeed through tender affection, but for greed of gain. Lucrezia (I now remember this lady's name), seeing the crown pieces were beginning to be missing with him and that he would soon run out, had nevertheless known how to carry her mock love to the end; she then began to assume such manners with him that he could very well perceive how dimly her fire was blazing. But what pained him most was the discovery of a new amorous caprice in his mistress. She had recently learnt that a certain Simone Davizi had, by his father's death, become very wealthy, and she fell in love with him at once and to such a degree that she com-

pletely forgot Niccolo. A wise, prudent and fortunate young woman, truly! She knew so well how to read one's eyes and instruct one's heart, that she discovered beauty among men in proportion as she saw they had gold or silver, and she felt most love when she heard the coins jingle.

Niccolo clearly saw that his affairs were going from bad to worse, and that he was being treated ignominiously by her whom he had cherished more than his life; but, far from decreasing in ratio to these outrages, his love, or more properly his rage, increased day by day. He longed to be with her as in the past and, finding no chance for it, he thundered against himself and her. He knew not on what to set his mind and his state inspired pity. The pals of his gay time had come with his fortune, and with it they had vanished. His relations would see him no more, his neighbors laughed at him, and strangers used to mock him.

Having well and duly considered all this on several occasions, he fell into such despair that he deliberated, as a last resource, on putting an end by some horrible death to such suffering, and perhaps he would

have put his idea into execution had he not, while recalling to mind the close friendship which had united him to Lapo and considering it as a sure thing that the latter would not have lost the remembrance of so tender an affection, thought it well on his part to go and see him, leaving aside all false shame, to relate to him his mishap and to beg his pardon, for God's sake. He therefore went to him without more ado, and did what he had resolved on.

Lapo who had, as they say, let three loaves pass for a couple, being unable to prevent it, did not fail to take pity on Niccolo, seeing him according to his own acknowledgements plunged into a completer ruin than he would have supposed ; he was greatly afflicted at it and knowing that his friend was in more need of help then counsel, said kindly to him : ‘ Niccolo, I do not wish to act like those who, after having warned their friend to no purpose, reproach him with not having listened to their advice ; those, I think, seek only to glorify themselves in blaming whoever has not lent an ear to their warnings. You are aware that, when I saw you entering into that way which led you to where I would rather

you were not, I fulfilled with my words the duty of a friend. Now that you are arrived at the end, it is not words which any longer suffice, and I mean not to fail by my acts in the same duty. I shall act as if I had sinned with you, and with you I shall undergo penance, sweet penance indeed, since it will give me the opportunity of showing what my heart is to my friend. The duty I wish to fulfil is as laudable and worthy of recommendation as it has always been, but very few men have discharged it; and this is the clearest proof of its merit; I too desire to be reckoned among this small number and, leaving words aside, wish to show you the effects. Come therefore with me.' Without another word he took him into his room and, having opened his money-box, gave him such a sum, that Niccolo might judge how much he loved him. He then exhorted him by kind words to be of good cheer and made him understand that, when this money was spent, he would not fail to supply him with more, as much and as often as he wanted. After having made him so generous a present and given such bright hopes for the future, Lapo began in a most friendly tone to criticize his past

life, to censure his connexion with that woman; and these words had such influence over Niccolo that, if they did not dislodge her at once from his thoughts, they nevertheless infused into his heart a certain regret for what he had done and excited a certain shame in him. He still loved the woman, and still longed for an occasion to slake his passion. But the treacherous female was not long before finding out that he was in funds again; conjecturing that everything had turned out to her greater advantage and not wishing to let him slip from her, she began a second time to importune him with letters, and so frequently withal that Niccolo was obliged to let himself be locked again in her arms. She persuaded him that he was finer than ever; that she more than ever wished him well; that all which had sprung up between them was no fault of hers, but of some relation or maid; that the very great love he bore her, that love which often causes the surest eye to see awry, had made him jealous about a thing which was far from being true; and she knew so nicely how to fool the poor devil that she squeezed many crown pieces out of him. And she would

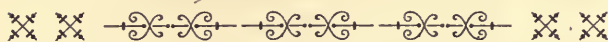
have had all his money had it not haply come to pass, as his cruel destiny would have it, that, one night among others while he was with her and had fallen asleep from fatigue after their amorous pleasures, she, who was not asleep, heard by certain understood signs her new lover passing by outside. Allured by her evil genius, she persuaded herself that Niccolo had, as they say, tied the ass to the right peg, and she longed to go as far as the door to amuse herself awhile with the other. She got up, threw a light covering over her shoulders, went down very quietly to the backdoor and invited her lover in. One word leads to another; from words to deeds is easy going; they deemed themselves in such security owing to the deep sleep of Niccolo that they remained thus far longer than was needed. Niccolo woke up just in the middle of the affair and, not finding Lucrezia beside him, was greatly surprised. He called her several times and, getting no answer, guessed the truth. He immediately jumped to his feet, dressed himself as best he could while groping in the dark, and, having stuck a sword in his belt, crept silently up to them. Before either of the

guilty pair noticed anything he was at their pillow and, beholding them stretched on sacks of flour, he was all of a sudden carried off with such wrath, such madness, that, without reflecting on what he was doing, he drew his sword and dealt both of them at once such a well-directed cut that he almost lopped off Simone's head, while grievously wounding the woman's arm ; then, his ire only increasing, he redoubled the cuts and only stopped when he saw that they both lay dead. All the inmates came running at this hubbub, they began to bewail the amiable young woman and each one had his word to stick in ; as to Niccolo, as if he made no question about the crime he had committed, he walked out of the house, satisfied that he had performed a great feat. Being still mad with fury and still grasping his reeking sword, he was running to Lapo's house, quite delighted to go and have a laugh over so fine an exploit, when he just fell into a squadron of the Bargello who, seeing him running in such a manner, surmised he was guilty of some crime and so dragged him off to jail. There, without there being need of pressing or torturing him, he confessed how the thing had hap-



pened and, found guilty of manslaughter, was sentenced to death. But his generous friend deemed that this was the moment to show what the greatness, the strength, of friendship may be: he did so much with the aid of friends and money that he saved his life for him. The sentence was commuted to banishment for life to Barletta, in Apulia. That did not satisfy Lapo; he condemned himself to exile and, forsaking his sweet and pleasing country, went to live with Niccolo, in a wretched land where he supplied his wants out of his private fortune. He brought back the wandering mind of his friend to the study of literature and other worthy occupations, and they both gained the esteem of the king of the country. He, in the course of time, obtained leave for Niccolò to live at Naples, and there the two friends lived till Niccolo's death, when Lapo had him taken to Florand buried him among his kindred. He likewise ordered that after his own death he was to be buried in the same grave, so that in death, as in life, they should not be divided.





## ROMANCE VII

### THE SEWED-UP BRIDE

There still lived in Florence, not many months ago, a certain Zanobi di Piero del Cima, one of those good Christians who recommend themselves to the Crucifix of San Giovanni, Chiarito or San Pier del Murrone; he had somewhat more confidence in the Annunciation of San Marco than in that of the Servites, and he used to say it was older and quainter. He gave other reasons for his preference, such as the angel's profile was sharper, the dove was whiter, and other like motives. I know he let himself be carried off more than once to severely upbraid the prior because he did not keep it veiled, stating that nothing had given so great a reputation to that of the Servites

and the Cintola of Prato, as the showing of them with much ado and many ceremonies. With all that, he was a fine fellow ; he often went to confession, fasted every Friday, assisted at Complines on all festival days and, when he made vows to these Crucifixes, he observed them as scrupulously as grocers weigh pepper, even though it clearly cost him money, for in all he spent on them at least a third of his income. In this way, without wife or children, he lived an easy and comfortable life with an old woman who was in his house for forty years.

Now this good old man was desirous of cutting a figure among the consuls of his Art, and he made a vow to the Crucifixes which were in the Oratory of the Servites that if he obtained this dignity he would give a hundred pounds in silver to some lass as a dowry. His vow was heard, and this was surely a great miracle for the Crucifixes had not even yet been painted !

The simpleton had no sooner heard the news of his election than, quite overwhelmed with joy and eager for compliments, he gave an account of his vow to his confessor, a certain Ser Giulano Bindi, rector of San Remo, and a reputed saint. The priest

mentioned to him a certain Monna Mechera da Calenzano of whom folks had whispered I know not what, implicating the priest himself ; but I should affirm nothing about it on that account, for it is a sin to think evil of monks, and especially of those who hear confessions, who say mass with down-cast eyes, and who have the care of souls, as well as the affairs of widows. Suffice it to say that he bore her affection and that, every time she came to Florence, she used to stay at his house. He informed her of what was in the air, and she set off at once in search of Zanobi and entreated him for God's sake to give the money to a daughter of hers who was ripe for marriage but penniless. Thanks to the cleric's assistance and her own clever coaxings, the silly fellow gave her a written promise, stating therein that as soon as a marriage was settled he would hand over a hundred pounds in hard cash. It has been asserted that he gave the woman no document, but simply promised by word of mouth, and that he gave the husband the writing later on ; this is more likely, and agrees better with what you are going to see. Be the truth then as it may, and let each understand it as he

will—I want no one's reproaches.

The gay old woman, once in possession of the promise, returned home quite merry and set herself to marry off her daughter. By the aid of her devoted priest she found a suitable husband ; but he, as soon as they had shaken hands, whether he had as a pledge the written engagement of Zanobi, or whether he received it from the mother-in-law, having given his word and the ring, was obliged to set out and spend a few weeks at Chianti on business, and he left with the intention of celebrating the wedding on his return.

It turned out that he was detained much longer than he had thought, so much so that Monna Mechera, believing he would not come back, was tempted to do a very funny thing and to even get hold of the hundred pounds. How she worked her daughter up to it and what her own end could really be, I cannot easily imagine ; suffice it to say she cast her eyes upon her neighbor, a certain big booby about twenty five years of age. Although this fellow acted the gawk he was a bit of a rake on the quiet. His name was Menicuccio dalle Prata.

One day the woman took him aside and said: 'Menicuccio, whenever you wish to do me a great favor, without its costing you anything, without your running any risk, you will be the means of my getting a hundred pounds as easily as picking them up in the street, and at the same time you will save my Sabatina from going to the bad. And here's how! A Florentine has promised me that when my daughter gets married he will give her a hundred pounds as a dowry and, as you are aware, I have betrothed her to Giannella del Mangano who has since gone to the end of the earth and who has sent word that he will not return to get married unless I first send him the money. But the donor will not part with the cash until the girl is married, so I do not know what course to take, and meanwhile Sabatina suffers. To tell you the truth I am heartily sick of it, and for some time now I have felt uneasy, seeing all day messing round here certain men I would not like to trust. You know what it is if a girl is pretty and there is no man in the house; folks respect nothing, so much the worse for the poor. I should like you to assist me in getting hold of this money, and

it would be easy if you will give your mind to it. First, I will make you a present of a beautiful brand-new shirt with quilted wrist bands and embroidered collar, the finest to be seen in the district; then I shall also give you the money to buy yourself a new pair of shoes and a cap.'

Imagine whether Menicuccio cocked his ears at such fine offers; he replied to Monna Mechera: 'Faith, if this thing is possible, I am coming in on the ground-floor! Anything, so long as I don't get pinched.' 'Eh, fool!' replied Monna Mechera, 'what do you say? Do you think I would let you run the slightest risk? God forbid! Do you know what I want? I want you to pretend you are my daughter's husband.'

'Oh! you want me to pose as your son-in-law? But everybody knows who he is.'

'Yes, here, but not at Florence. The three of us will go there, you calling yourself Giannella, and you will tell this Florentine that you wish to get married at once. As he has never seen you before, he will believe you are the bridegroom and will count you out the money. You will then hand it over to me, and I shall thus be able to compel Giannella to keep his promise.



Otherwise, I can see the job hanging on a twelve-month.'

The thing seemed easy enough to Menicuccio, were it not that he feared the Florentine might know him; but the woman understood so well how to get round him that he finally agreed and said: 'All right, carry on! I've had harder jobs, anyhow. But look here, you will have to pay me a carlino a day while the farce lasts, to make up for the time I lose from work.'

Agreeing, the woman took him home, and they talked the matter over with the girl, and arranged their plans. Early next morning they set out for Florence.

Some people pretend that the young lass, who was all there, seeing in Menicuccio a big blond blockhead, a fellow fit to make one languish and safe as a eunuch, conceived the idea of enjoying herself. Others say that he cared far more about the girl than he did about Monna Mechera's promises; that, while showing himself a jovial clown, he was, as we say, a thorough blackguard who had played many dirty tricks. However, I affirm nothing, though I rather fancy he was a bit of both.

They went off therefore, as I was saying,

in search of Zanobi, who was just walking out from Laud in Or San Michele, and they told him how they were coming for the hundred pounds, because the husband, Menicuccio, so they stated, wished to lead the bride to the altar next Tuesday (it being now Saturday), and that their intention was to buy a bed at the Monday market, and so on, and so forth.

The old man had arrived back the previous evening from Riboja where he had been visiting a small demesne which he intended to purchase ; he received them most kindly and told them he was wholly at their disposal, but that he wanted to see the girl married with his own eyes, and suffered himself nowise to be played with. Consequently it would be his pleasure to have them to supper, and to lend them a bed and dispose of everything that would be requisite, in order that the marriage might be consummated in his house on the following night. Of course they agreed.

They went next morning, which was Sunday, to the wedding mass as man and wife, and in the evening they supped at Zanobi's table and abandoned themselves to all the gaiety and diversion usual in like cases be-

tween newly married couples, to the great joy of Zanobi who congratulated himself on having been the means of such a charming union, and who hoped that his deed would bring him further good luck.

When they all had supped their fill, and bedtime had arrived, he made the young couple understand that they were to go and sleep in a room halfway up the house where he usually slept his farmer whenever he came to bring him a basket of apples. He told Monna Mechera that she would sleep with his old servant, but she wanted to be in the same room as her daughter. He explained to her how unlawful this was, and would on no account tolerate it. She held her peace, not wishing to create any suspicion in his mind, but she called Sabatina to her and, having taken her aside, preached her a long sermon face to face, that she should take precious good care not to let Menicuccio sow his beans in the drills of Monte Ficale. Not contented with what the cunning wench had promised and sworn to her twenty times over, she sewed her up in her chemise from head to foot with a double thread so that it was impossible for her to get out. She next called Menicuccio

and, having made him swear that he would conduct himself as with his own sister, she put the couple to bed and then went off to her own room.

The bridegroom and bride had not been more than half an hour in bed when, whether it was the warmth of the blankets, or the itching of a little scab which Sabatina felt tickling her between her thighs, or whether she wished to micturate, or no matter why, she set about looking for the means of ripping the chemise, and she struggled so hard with her hands and feet that she worked herself entirely out of it. The poor boy, whose conscience was perhaps pricking him for being in such a place, began by stretching his legs and throwing out his arms as one does on waking; then, perceiving the change, as by mere chance, he laid his hands on the girl. She was undoubtedly a bad bedfellow, for she set to tumbling over his side; he did as much, and they were soon in each others arms. Menicuccio, being the stronger, rolled over on top and stormed the imminent breach; then thinking he had perhaps done wrong and wishing to make peace, he began to kiss and embrace her, but, as she seemed cross with him, he char-

ged to the assault once more. Eight times did he renew the charge, till Sabatina, taking the offensive, dragged him underneath herself and squeezed him so tightly that he had to cry out. She too had matter for whining, and began to weep; nevertheless, she had done battle so boldly that I can not think it was her first engagement.

At length the hour for rising came, and when Monna Mechera saw that the chemise was ripped, that the outlaws had violated their ban and passed through Hollow Street butchery, she felt like kicking up a row; then, inspired with a better thought, in order not to disclose the plot, and knowing besides that she had found what she was looking for, held her peace as best she could and, turning to Menicuccio, besought him for God's sake not to say a word to a soul. Without further parley, as soon as dressed, they went off to Zanobi who was waiting for them by the kitchen fire, where he was explaining what the Flower of Virtue meant to his old servant. The gay old dog wished them 'good morning' and 'many happy returns,' gave them a good breakfast, then handed them the money done up in a handkerchief. He next gave them his blessing,

begging them to visit him from time to time, then packed them off home, letting them take the written engagement with them.

They returned all merry and bright to Calenzano and, to compensate Menicuccio, the old woman allowed him to interview her daughter; for, since he had had his hands in the paste, she fancied that one does not soil the trough more to make ten loaves than one.

This state of things lasted perhaps two months, until Giannella the true husband came back. Shortly after his return he resolved to conclude the marriage and, without consulting the ma-in-law, which was the cause of all the wrangling, betook himself to Florence. He met Zanobi who was just hearing mass at the altar of the Virgin in Santa Maria del Campo and, after many twists and turns, asked him for the hundred pounds.

At this request, without answering a word, Zanobi burst out laughing, thinking that this was a joke, but Giannella began to bawl out that honest men do not give their word to deny it afterwards and that, if his money was not counted out to him,

he well knew where to go and see justice done him, so that Zanobi, deviating for once from his habits, was forced into a fury and replied by a stream of insults, like any other man. 'You rascal, you robber, where do you think you are? In the street, perhaps? Three months ago Monna Mechera, Sabatina, and her husband came to see me and, in my house, under my very nose, consummated the marriage with all the usual ceremonies. I handed them the money myself, and now this thief comes and asks for it again. It is true I forgot to get back my agreement, I gave it no thought, not suspecting that anyone would attempt such a trick. This man must have stolen it from them; fortunately for me I entered it in my book, I took note of everything, and you cannot catch me, wretch. If you do not get out of my sight I shall lodge a complaint and have you treated as you deserve.' On seeing his bad humor, Giannella went straight to the Episcopal Palace and had him summoned. Zanobi presented himself, related to the vicar how the thing had taken place, and the vicar ordered Monna Mechera, her daughter, and Menicuccio to appear; through them we learned all, even to

the story of the chemise, and how Sabatina won the final round. The vicar's sentence was, that the old hag should be flogged, that Menicuccio should give Giannella forty pounds which had been spent, and that Giannella should take Sabatina to his own home, asking no questions about her doings with Menicuccio. This latter, in order to find the forty pounds, was obliged to sell his land. They say the vicar gave this judgment because he had faked the marriage mass, but I do not think so. He had really married them and it is wrong to suggest otherwise. He proved what *Futuro caret* means, an adage which signifies that the fruit or rather the first-crop cost poor Menicuccio dearly. But he who possesses once for all does not always suffer!





---

---

ROMANCE VIII

THE PRECIOUS JEWEL

Should anybody say : ‘ They have just caught a fox,’ you would not cry out a miracle, remembering the proverb : ‘ Foxes also allow themselves to be taken,’ you would be more inclined to think that the dexterity of some man or the courage of some animal had put the beast in this fix. But if you learned that a gentle dove, the first day she left the nest, had succeeded in taking two foxes, one of which is old and cunning and capable, he alone, of shifting as many hens as any four other foxes, you would not only be amazed, but you would declare it impossible. And that’s where you would be wrong, for the thing happened at Prato, in this very country, in these

latter days, and if I can relate it to you as nicely as it took place, I have no doubt about making you laugh. Anyhow, I'll try.

You know Santolo di Doppio del Quadro for one of those who are hard to deceive. He is a stoutish man with old-fashioned whiskers. He plays chess in his apron, and does his own marketing. People fancy he is quite a simpleton, but beware of his shoe-toe! He knows his reckoning as well as another, especially when he plays cards with the ladies. He is a man of sound conscience; he would willingly help a widow who was in need of the stuff for a petticoat for a marriageable daughter, provided he was paid back the value in yarn. Taking one year with another he weaves a good deal of linen in his shop, and always has plenty of spinning to give out. When he comes unexpectedly among a group of women seated round a fire he plants himself on the lowest stool and, if one of them drops her spindle in the ashes, he picks it up and hands it back with a low bow, and then tells them some of the funniest tales you ever heard. He is a devotee of the Virgin Mary, but withal a jolly fellow who enjoys a joke and is slow to take offence.

This man therefore on hearing that one of his friends was getting married, thought at once of obstructing the wedding procession, as is the custom in this town, in order to get something from the bride and then to poke fun at the bridegroom, who was, he too, a noble and gallant young man, accustomed all day long to take in others and to get himself nicely caught in his turn. He went off for one of his friends, one of those fine fellows to whom one has only to say: 'Come,' and they come, and: 'Stay,' and they stay; being so little habituated to say no, that before coming away with you no matter where, if another arrives who wishes to take him someplace else, simply while you are getting your cloak, he will go, for not knowing how to refuse. The most serviceable man in life; if he says to one of his comrades while playing at spotted cards: 'Give me the ace of denier,' and the comrade hands him thirty-two, he answers: 'All right.' Never angry, never grumbling, never uttering an evil word, he would eat without hunger, drink without thirst, fast without there being any vigil, hear two masses on a weekday and none on Sunday, merely for company. To give pleasure, he

would sleep till midday or get up before daybreak; never eat salad in winter or drink water in summer; if you were sad he would cheer you; if you were gay he would make your sides split with laughing; he would sooner spend money than earn it, give than receive, oblige than ask. When he has cash, he spends it: when he has none, he lives without spending that of others; if he borrows, he gives back; if he lends, he forgets to claim it; tell him the truth, he believes it; tell him lies, he holds them for downright certainties; he prefers to think of nothing rather than puzzle his brains and, what we must begrudge him, is that he bears misfortune better than anyone else I know. In fine, he is one of the best, and born to please.

Santolo, having therefore met him, said to him: 'Fallabacchio, I want us to have a bit of sport with the man who is marrying Verdespina this evening. I have found out who will be with the bride, and the way they will go. I reckon we ought to get enough out of them to regale ourselves on two fat kids at their expense. And we will invite the bridegroom to the feast, and have a bit of fun out of him, not half!'

‘Oh! yes, yes,’ replied Fallabacchio, nodding his head and hugging Santolo, ‘Oh! we will buy two champion kids, and I will pick them myself. I will get two fat milk kids from Fagiuoli who understands such things. I will make the sauce myself, and shall boil one of the hind quarters. I shall dress the civet with sweet majoram, and the kidneys with eggs. Oh, what a chance! How we shall guttle! To begin with, we shall eat the livers with pepper, but no laurel, only sage!’ And he jumped for joy, and added: ‘We shall want something to drink; where shall we go for the wine?’

‘You can leave that to me.’

‘Come on then, let’s get on the job.’

Thus chatting about the supper, they waited for tidings of the bride’s setting out, and then rushed off before her. Racing away, wet with sweat, and hatless, they caught the cortege near the Torre degli Scrini. Those who were accompanying the bride, seeing them from afar, said to themselves: ‘Here they come; what shall we do?’ The bride, quite young as you know, and in tears at the thought of leaving home, nevertheless kept her head and replied: ‘Let them come, I shall satisfy them; moth-

er and I have thought out what to do.'

Santolo and Fallabacchio had at last got up to them, and they cried out together: 'Give us a gratuity, or we shall not let you pass,' and, as the folks made no reply, Fallabacchio shouted: 'If you do not give us a gratuity I will run away with the bride on my back.'

The bride's friends looked at one another but kept silent. The chaste young bride, whose tear-stained cheeks helped the illusion, took a ring from her finger, not without much time and difficulty, and handed it to the men, saying: 'Take this pledge and, for God's sake, cause us no further misfortunes; but be on your guard not to lose it, it is the finest ring I have.'

The merry fools, believing they had caught a fine fish, gathered up their nets and went off full of glee to Antonio dei Bardi's where there were, as every evening, many gentlemen playing and otherwise passing the time. They went in laughing uproariously and kicking up such a dust as never was, and intimating that they had just performed some wonderful cleverness, and showing the ring to any who would look. These latter, whether they knew but

little about it, or to leave them in their blissful ignorance, told them the brilliant was a genuine one worth a pile of money, and thus confirmed them in their first opinion. That their glory might be spread throughout the whole world and the high renown of so magnificent a result might be raised above the clouds, our heroes resolved to go that very night and make a display of their trophy in the best houses of Prato and to triumph publicly over it on the morrow in broad daylight.

They first visited Monna Amorriscia, a lovely and bewitching young woman, Fal-labacchio's gossip and near kin to the bride. There, with much mirth, they related the adventure, and exhibited the ring at a distance, as people point to the Cintola. Everyone said: 'Bring it a bit nearer,' but they exclaimed: 'Not likely; do you want us to lose it?' At length however they let Monna Amorriscia view it closely; as soon as she got hold of it, she discovered that it had been fabricated at the expense of an old candlestick, and that the stone was quarried in the Glass Mountains. She began to laugh and, after having kept them some time on edge: 'By Gad!' she says to

them: 'guard it most preciously and take care not to lose it; you would ruin Verdospina.' 'The deuce! and what is it worth, in your opinion?' asked Santolo. 'Indeed, the night is a bad time for valuing jewels, especially when they are of great worth, as this one is; but, at a rough guess, taking into account both brass and glass, soldering, edging, and chasing, it is worth not less than two farthings, perhaps three.'

Santolo, assuming his serious air and snatching the ring out of her hands, cried: 'Oh, do you not see how she imposes on us?' But, when he had the ring in his hand, he did not feel quite so sure of himself. He perceived by its color and weight that he had been to catch partridges with an ox, and he began to puff and blow.

'What is the matter with you?' asked Fallabacchio. 'Do you not see how she is jeering at us? Bitch! what a beautiful ruby! What is this I say? It is a cornelian, no, a turquoise. Anyhow, whatever it is, it is superb. I will go straight away to a goldsmith and raise a florin on it so that we can buy the kids for the day after to-morrow. What day will it fall on? It will be Saturday—they will be fat.'



Without further parley, off he went to a goldsmith's shop and assured himself that the ring might be a suitable present for a nursemaid, at a pinch. The two friends were furious at being duped, and they swore that they would plunder the bride's trousseau and demand double value for everything they could capture, before giving it up. However, the bridegroom heard of their threats, and he arranged that some of his friends should keep the two jokers out of the way until all the thing were safely packed away, and thus they were fooled again.

But Verdespina, ill satisfied because the joke was not carried further, made her intentions known to Monna Amorriscasca, and the latter, highly delighted, prepared beforehand what was to be done.

On Saturday morning Verdespina sent word to Santolo and Fallabacchio that they were to return her ring, that she would give them a gratuity, and so generous a one too that they would be able to treat themselves to a couple of kids. The fellows would have willingly believed that she wanted to make a laughing-stock of them if certain folks, who had been given the hint, had not

thought of whispering in their ears that Monna Amorrhisca had changed their ring, that they knew for certain that it was worth more than thirty crowns, and that the bridegroom was wild when he heard the story and intended to put a stop to the game at once. And, believe me, they swallowed the tale !

They went to the gossip and asked her if she had changed the ring. She first took to laughing and, while laughing, to deny it with those looks which people assume when they want to jest in saying no ; they were only the more certain that the gossip had changed it and, getting very angry, cried out 'robber' and almost called her names—how she had them mocked by the whole town, how folks did not act in that manner, and how she must give them back the ring or take the consequences. But to irritate them still more, she held her tongue. Fallabacchio, raising his voice higher, cried : 'Gossip, give us the ring ; if not, I swear I will snatch your watch off you when you are at church to-morrow.'

Seeing that things were going as she wished, but pretending to be affronted, Monna Amorrhisca told them she had not changed

the ring to wrong them, still less to keep it, as they seemed to think, but simply to laugh over it a day or two with them, then to give it back to them. Now, since they had got angry, since they threatened her and made such a fuss about it, she intended to treat them as they deserved. Consequently, let them not think to get back the ring unless they first pay down for two kids, and the fattest that could be found in the market this morning. Santolo and Fallabacchio, seeing her in such a rage, wished to pacify her, but all to no purpose. She left them to fight it out together and flung off, saying: 'Now remember what I have told you!'

The two fellows walked out quite downhearted and pondering on what to do. At the same moment, the bridegroom sent them word that he must have the ring at all costs, and they could ask whatever they liked. He wanted the matter settled at once as the joke had gone too far for his liking. Fallabacchio turned to Santolo: 'The bridegroom is within his rights, but what the devil can we do? Let us buy the kids for the gossip, we can ask her to supper at the same time and make peace with

her. Then if the bridegroom wants his ring he must pay for it, otherwise he gets nothing.'

They stuck to this resolution, went to the market, bought two fat kids, took them to the gossip and asked for the ring. She told them that she would not fail to give it them, but not till Sunday evening, when they must come to her house and share in the feast. What she was doing with them was, said she, for their good, because she wished also to invite Verdespina and her husband who, in this way, would feel less disinclination to settle with them generously. They told her this was a good idea but that she ought to send word previously to the husband to leave them alone and not reclaim the ring before the following evening. As to that, they might leave it to her, replied she, for she knew quite well how to pacify the husband.

The poor dupes having departed, Monna Amorriscas sent word to Verdespina that everything was ready for the unravelling of the plot, and that she and her husband were to come to her house to-morrow evening. Verdespina replied that they would be there without fail.

On Sunday evening Monna Amorriscio invited a number of girl friends and their husbands to her party, so that the joke might get discussed all over the town, and also that homage might be paid to the new-made bride. Of course, Santolo and Fallabacchio were there.

The supper over, Monna Amorriscia and Verdespina, desiring that nobody should ignore the joke played on Santolo and Fallabacchio and that the men should be thoroughly mocked, related what had taken place; men and women, all, all began to set up a clatter at the expense of the two fellows who at first seemed inclined to kick up a dust; but, seeing that the more they defended themselves the more they were laughed at, like good-natured fellows they joined in the general merriment, stating that after all it was not any miracle that they were mistaken about the value of the ring as they were not goldsmiths. But some say that Santolo did not laugh very heartily; being more thoroughly duped than Fallabacchio, he took more of it to his own account.





## ROMANCE IX

### THE EVEN MATCH

You must know there was at Siena, in the Camporeggi quarter (the time is not so far back but that everyone of you will remember it), a certain Monna Francesca of a pretty good family and fairly well off. She had remained widow with one daughter already ripe for marriage (in fact she got her married a few months after to a certain Meo di Mino da Rossia who, being occupied in the management of the magnificent Borghes' demesnes, lived most of the time outside Siena) and a son who was scarcely seven years old. Being busy in bringing up her two children and unwilling to marry again, she lived very quietly. In the meantime, a Dominican Brother, a bachelor of

theology named Fra Timoteo, seeing she was fresh and goodlooking, cast his eyes upon her. Either because of the severe flagellations which he administered to himself, or because of the prolonged fastings to which he was subjected, his face shone to such a degree that you could have lighted a match on his ruddy cheeks.

The good lady thought he would be just the man for her, one who would suit her quiet situation and help her to remedy the irksome privations of widowhood. Now, whether it was from him or from her that the first advances came, I really cannot say; let it suffice for you that she became a near kin to the good Lord, and she went to confession so often, and stayed so willingly at the San Domenico Church, that the people of the district proclaimed her a half saint.

While things were going on as you have just heard, the daughter, Laura by name, had long since divined her mother's wisdom by many signs and, unwilling to belie that elegant proverb 'What is the offspring of the hen, must scratch the dunghill,' resolved to follow her example. Soon did she prove so apt a pupil that, what time her mother was displaying her conscience to the



pious monk, she was learning from a certain Andreuolo Pannili, a lawyer, the conduct to be observed in the consummation of matrimony.

Now it happened that one night when the widow was entertaining her spiritual comforter in her room, that they made more noise than was wise and the daughter divined the nature of their devotions. Believing now that she herself need take no further precautions, she sent her brother to fetch their neighbor Agnesa, a friend of all true lovers, and asked her to bid her sweetheart come at once. The gentleman lost no time in putting in an appearance and, entering her room by the usual way, laid himself down by his darling in bed; but Laura, instead of arranging it so that her mother could not hear them, began to caress her lover quite as if he were her husband, while saying as loudly as possible: 'O my dear soul, you are a thousand times welcome! O my sweet fresh cheeks, my ruby lips, when shall I kiss you enough so as to grow weary of it, I will not say satiated! Never, surely never, were I to kiss you till I died!' In pronouncing these words she gave him such smacks that you

might have heard them a mile away. The lawyer being made acquainted with what was up, he too did not fail to do his duty, and there finally resulted such a commotion as made Monna Francesca's ears tingle. Attracted by the noise, she tip-toed to their door and ascertained that they were not confining their activities to mere words. Like many another woman who busies herself with the faults of others rather than her own, she grew angry beyond all bounds and, driving the door in before her with unparalleled fury, she bounced into the room, found Laura in bed, affronted her in such a manner that you would have said she was going to eat her up raw. Foaming with rage, she squawked out: 'Tell me, what's that I've just been hearing you say? O Laura, Laura, is this the way, is this the way virtuous girls behave? Have I taught you these things? Have I brought you up in this way? Have I grounded you in such principles that you durst hurl this insult into my face? Have I ever set you such an example? O God! whom do you take after? O my husband! how fortunate that you died and have been spared this shame! What will our relations say—what

will your husband say, he who dotes on you so? You might at least have avoided such goings-on in my house, and have waited till your husband took you away, as he intends to do shortly. Away, slut, away, get out of my sight; you are no daughter of mine, you brazen-faced bitch! O God, I might have suspected this, had I not been blind! But alas, how could I have thought such a thing of a daughter of mine, when here at this moment, though I have seen with my own eyes, I cannot believe it. O God, my too ardent affection for Thee, the too great confidence I had, knowing my own life, caused me to see all awry. Now I understand why, the other morning at church, Monna Andreoccia warned me against letting you gad about: she knew something, and it only wanted this to make us the talk of the town! There then is the reason for your secret talks with that Agnesa, yes, there it is, but I'll pay you out, my lady! Have I not given you a young and vigorous husband, good enough for anybody? Just you wait till he gets back; I will tell him myself what you have been doing, and he shall chastise you with his own hand.'

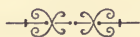
While uttering these threats and many

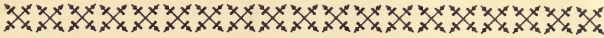
more besides, she made as big a row as an old dame would who had lost a pen of poultry. Laura, who, all the while her mother was snubbing her, had remained with her eyes fixed on the ground, as one wholly confused, pretending to be greatly afraid, answered her: 'My dear little mamma, I accuse myself before you for having done evil, and beg pardon for God's sake; I beseech you to excuse my youth, to have at the same time respect for mine honor and your own, to be good enough to forgive me this time, and to say nothing to my husband; I swear to you on my love for him, never more to do the slightest thing against your wish. This time, that God may forgive me my grievous sin, that He may withdraw me from the gates of hell and remove this thorn from my tortured flesh, I wish to make a full confession before going to sleep again. Be therefore kind enough to go to your room and fetch me that holy monk whom you are keeping locked up; he it is shall give me absolution.'

Consider how the mother felt when she heard this request, and whether she regretted she had made such a fuss about a fault of which she was now herself convicted.

At the moment when, wishing to hide her confusion, she began to mutter I know not what philastrocoles altogether beside the point, it seemed to Andreuolo that now was the time to come from behind the curtain and handle the matter in legal style. So he burst in on them, saying: 'Monna Francesca, what is the use of all these exclamations? If you have discovered your daughter with a young man, she has caught you with a monk; you are both at the same game—six to one and half-a-dozen to the other. The best thing you can do is to get back to your monk, while I stay here with Laura, and then we shall, all four of us, enjoy our love in holy accord. We shall be so cautious that no one will ever be the wiser, whereas if you do as you say, you will throw so much meat on the fire that more than one batch of wood will be needed to cook it, and you will be the first to repent. Be wise; take the safe road while you can, and give yourself no cause for sorrow.' The poor widow knew not what to say, she was so abashed. She wanted to steal away without further parley. At last, feeling that she had only heard the truth, she muttered: 'All right, I will

say no more, except that you do as you like. And I beseech you, young man, let there be no scandal.' Having said these words she returned to her room. But the young man followed her and compelled her to agree to prepare a supper for them all that very night, and acknowledge one another as relations, and arrange that each might come to the house whenever he liked without fear of interference. The holy concord worked so well that the two women were daily more contented. It is true, indeed, that sometimes in the morning while talking together of their lovers' exploits, they discovered that very often the young man had allowed himself to be surpassed, and that by more than one affray, by the monk, although the latter was growing old. This made Laura envious of her mother, and was the cause of many quarrels with Andreuolo.





## ROMANCE X

### THE WILL

You must know that we meet in all professions far fewer upright men than sordid men ; you will not then find it very strange that there are among monks but a small number near that perfection which their rule imposes on them, and that moreover Avarice, which reigns over all courts, both spiritual and temporal, has claimed a little corner within the cloisters of poor friars.

There was at Novara, a city of Lombardy, a very rich lady named Madonna Agnesa who was left a widow through the death of one Gaudenzio. He had left her, besides her marriage portion, which, according to the customs of these realms, was considerable, immense riches, investing her with

their entire free disposal on the condition that, without marrying again, she should attend to the education of the four sons he had by her.

Gaudenzio was hardly dead when news of the will reached the Father of the Monastery of the Brothers of Santo Nazaro, as he kept a look-out for this sort of thing. His office was to see that no pretty widow should escape them, but should gird on the cord of the blessed Saint Francis, and that, becoming one of their beguines, listening daily to their sermons, begging their prayers for her dead, she might address to them in return nice pies in the Lombardy style; then that she should, in process of time, being inflamed with burning zeal for the pious works of the blessed Fra Ginepro or some other of their saints, decide about founding in their Church a chapel where they painted funny stories—such as when Saint Francis was preaching to the birds in the desert, when he made the miraculous soup or when the angel Gabriel brought him his sandals; all she needed to do after that was to endow it with a nice round sum that they might be able to celebrate every year the feast of those blessed Stigmata, possessed of so



many virtues, Lord my God ! and to recite an office every Monday for the souls of her relations detained in the pains of purgatory. But for the simple reason that they cannot, owing to their profession of poverty, hold so much wealth as belonging to the monastery, they have lately devised a scheme of possessing it as chapel endowments, and they think perhaps by this means to cheat Our Lord in the same way as they daily cheat men. They delude themselves that God does not see the depths of their intentions and knows not that, if they act thus, it is because they are envious and jealous of those gorbellied monks who, far from wandering barefooted, carry with them five pairs of pumps, and do nothing but mug themselves in luxurious cells ; who, if they are perchance obliged to go outside the monastery, jog along at their ease on a fat pony, and who do not tire their minds with books, for fear the science they might glean therein might elate them with pride and cause them to fall away from the monastic simplicity.

To return to the point, this devout Father-guardian scented out the widow so well and made such a spluther round her with

his sandals that she consented to become affiliated to the Third Order, and the monks got many good meals and new habits out of her. This seemed to them as yet nothing or scarcely worth while, and they were all day long at her heels, reminding her of the article for the chapel. But the good lady, both because she knew she would be doing wrong by robbing her sons to bestow on the monks, and because she was naturally mean, went no farther than promises.

While they were incessantly soliciting her and she feeding them on hopes, it happened that she fell dangerously ill and sent for the father, Fra Serafino, to hear her confession. He ran to her with all speed and, as soon as he had heard her confession, seeing that the vintage-time had at last arrived, he told her, as an act of charity, that she should think of her salvation while there was yet time; that she should not rely upon her sons, who were only awaiting her death to laugh at her; and that she should recall to mind Donna Lionora Caccia, the wife of Doctor Cervagio, that when she was dead there was not one of her sons who was willing to light a candle for her,

not even on All Souls' Day; that this was very little for one so rich as she, and that both she and her relations would gain from her bequests. In short, he told the tale so well that the dying woman was almost resolved to say she would, and asked him to come back next day when he should have her decision. Meanwhile, her youngest son, Agabio, having got a hint of what was up, told his brothers, and they, to make quite sure, thought it would be well, should the monk return, if one of them hid under the bed and listened to the arrangement. So on the next day, Fra Serafino having come back to conclude the bargain, Agabio slipped under his mother's bed and heard the monk urge her so forcibly, unfold to her so many arguments, quote so many doctors and put her into such a fright about Purgatory, that she resolved to bequeath two hundred pounds in hard cash to build and decorate a chapel, a hundred more for altar ornaments and, as a donation, (provided that a feast should be celebrated in it every year, and a mass said daily) the half of an undivided demesne which she owned at Camigliano, near the pillory, which was worth in all more than three thousand

pounds. Having agreed upon the name of the chapel and the services, the monk hurried off, and Agabio got from under the bed without his mother's perceiving it, and related what he had heard to his brothers who, aided by a few relations, came to their mother and dissuaded her from such a plan.

Agabio, feeling that his mother would be satisfied to let the stream follow its natural course, thought it would be as well to get a laugh out of the Father; he called aside one of their footmen and despatched him on his mother's part to bid the monk come no more to the house to tire her and talk over again what was settled—her sons had got to know of her scheme and had planned to play him an ugly trick, should he re-appear. Let him nevertheless remain tranquil—she would take care that her wishes were carried out. From the moment he should learn that Our Lord had disposed of her, he had only to go to Ser Tomeno Alzalendina's and ask for the will and get it executed.

The footman went and delivered the message, so that Fra Serafino appeared no more; but, having soon learnt that Madonna Agnesa had yielded her soul to her Maker, he

quickly went to Ser Tomeno and asked for the will. Ser Tomeno, advised beforehand by Agabio of what he was to do, answered him unhesitatingly that he must see Agabio who was acquainted with the provisions of the will. Without more ado the monk called on Agabio and, after the usual expressions of sympathy, asked to see the will. Agabio made no other reply to his request except that he was greatly surprised to see him enquiring for what did not concern him, and told him to mind his own business. The good Father did not in any way trouble himself about this reception; he believed all the more that the will was only the more favorable to him, and without further argument betook himself to a certain Master Niccolo, attorney for the monastery, and asked him to deal with this affair. Niccolo at once had Ser Tomeno summoned before the Bishop's vicar, and demanded a copy of the will. Tomeno, having received the summons, ran off to Agabio and told him how things stood. Agabio, who was only waiting for that, repaired to the vicar, who was a great friend of his, and informed him of all that had taken place up to then, as well as of what

he intended to do, always providing it had his approval. The vicar, being of course the monk's enemy, in his capacity of priest, assured him that he would be very glad of it; and so the next day there came Fra Serafino and his attorney demanding that they should be shown a copy of the will.

Agabio stepped forward at this request and said: 'My Lord Vicar, I am very happy to produce it in the presence of your Lordship; but on the condition that all its clauses be executed in good and due form, by all those named therein, no matter who.'

'The thing is clear,' replies the vicar; 'the law disposes that he who has the profits ought also to bear the charges. Produce therefore the will; justice will have it so.' Agabio, immediately pulling a large roll of paper from his pocket, handed it to a notary of the bench, telling him to read it, which he did.

After having read the appointing of heirs and a few other legacies mentioned in order to inspire greater confidence in the guest, the notary came at length to the part concerning the monk and which began thus: 'ITEM—for the safeguard of my childrens' goods and the salvation of all the widows

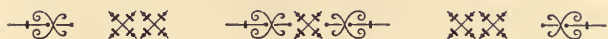
of Novara, I wish that by these same children and their own hands, there be given to Fra Serafino, at present Guardian of the Convent of San Nazaro, fifty lashes, the best and heaviest they shall know how to apply, so that this monk and his equals may long remember that it is not always advisable to wish to persuade silly women without judgment and foolish bigots to disinherit and ruin their children for the sake of enriching chapels.' Such bursts of laughter arose from all parts of the court that the notary could not finish his reading, and do not ask me if all those present began to make a fool of the poor Father who, seeing himself stuck there with shame and affront, wished to get off back to the convent and draw up a complaint to be sent to the Apostolic See. But Agabio, seizing him by the habit and holding him fast, began to cry out: 'Hold on, Father, whither away so fast? I am quite prepared to carry out the duties imposed on me by the will,' and turning towards the Vicar, without letting go of the monk, he added: 'My Lord, have him stretched on the rack—I am bent on fulfilling my obligation; otherwise, I shall complain of your Lordship and say you

have not rendered me justice.' The vicar thought this was enough, if not too much, considering, as he ought, the dignity of the monk and the Order of Minor Friars; he turned to Agabio and, half laughing, said: 'Agabio, sufficient that you have shown your good will; Fra Serafino, opining that this legacy would be burthensome on the convent, refuses to accept it; since he refuses, you cannot force it on him. Let him therefore go about his business.' And, with the kindest words he could find, he dismissed him.

The monk, as soon as he got leave, went full of rage to the convent, and remained therein a long while without showing his nose, owing to his great shame. He never again exhorted widows to bequeath their goods to chapels, especially if they had grown-up sons capable of holding him up to ridicule. Yet, the vicar had to repent of it—the joke cost him more than five hundred florins.

END

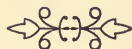




## CONTENTS

---

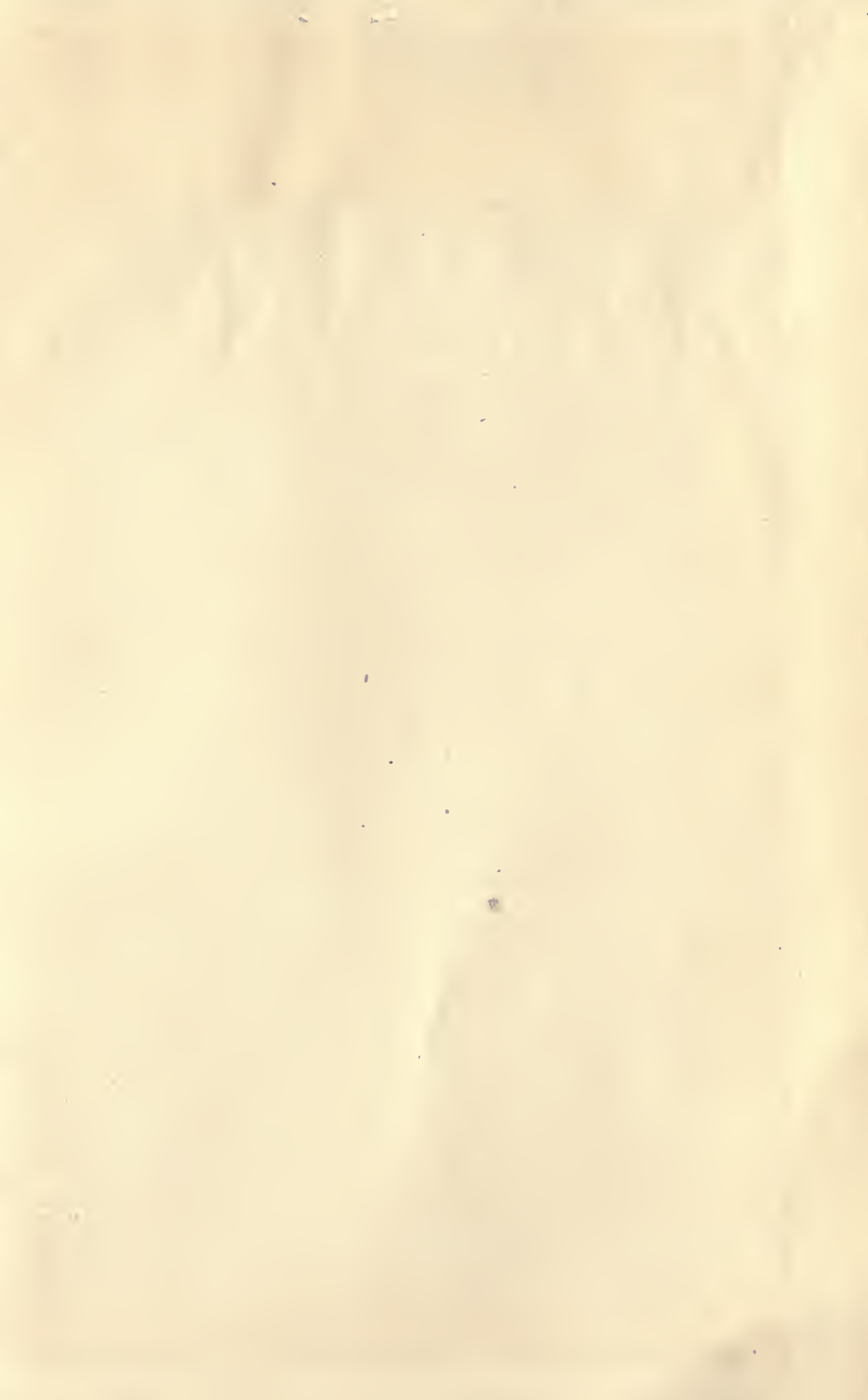
PREFACE . . . . .	VII
THE COMELY SLAVE . . . . .	1
THE METAMORPHOSIS . . . . .	27
THE DOUBLE CHANGE . . . . .	43
PENANCE . . . . .	56
TEMPTATION OF THE FLESH . . . . .	69
THE TWO FRIENDS . . . . .	77
THE SEWED-UP BRIDE . . . . .	91
THE PRECIOUS JEWEL . . . . .	105
THE EVEN MATCH . . . . .	119
THE WILL . . . . .	127











PO

4622

23

1889

**THE LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
Santa Barbara**

**THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE  
STAMPED BELOW.**

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**A** 000 808 037 6

